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**A Research Enquiry to Ascertain the Extent to Which Managerialism has
Permeated the Headship Role in England.**

Peter William Richard Coles

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

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Abstract

This research enquiry examines the extent to which managerialism has permeated the headship role in England. It analyses the literature pertaining to the changing role of headship in England, managerialism, the marketization of education and the impact that these elements have had on the headship role in England, as well as the manner in which they have impacted upon schools in general. The study also explored England's National College for School Leadership, its headship standards and its generic headship training.

The research was conducted by way of semi-structured interviews with six headteachers, two of whom were new to headship, two of whom had more than five years of experience and two of whom were retired. The sample included a mix of state school and independent school headteachers. The data revealed a stark contrast between the professional experiences of state school headteachers and independent school headteachers.

The state school headteachers cited pressures of governmental interference and also noted the pressures posed by the socioeconomic background of the given school's intake. The headteachers also expressed feeling insecure from one day to the next and there was an overriding sense of confusion predominantly due to constant changes in government directives. By contrast, any impact on the independent school headteachers from government intervention and interference was demonstrably absent.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Question

In this introductory chapter, I will explain why this area was chosen and what contribution the study will make to the existing body of knowledge. I will also give an overview of the research enquiry as a whole in order for the reader to be able to understand its structure. The title of the research indicates a broad area for research and has three sub-questions. These are intrinsically linked to the main question that I intend to address:

- (1) In what manner have government policies and subsequent legislation impacted upon headship in England?
- (2) What has been the impact of managerialist conceptions of generic management and leadership on headteachers in England as manifested in national standards, training institutions and qualifications?
- (3) In what manner and to what extent have any such changes to headship affected teachers, students and parents?

1.2 Background and Justification of the Substantive Topic

There have been discernible changes to the role of the headteacher in England (Fielding (1997), Jirasinghe and Lyons (1996) and most especially since the 1988 Education Reform Act introduced under a Conservative government (Gewirtz (2002), Day et al (2003). Indeed, the changes since that time have remained consistent in their correlation to the ideological perspective of the incumbent government irrespective of its party political affiliation.

The manifestation of such ideologies is predominantly in the form of acts of parliament and initiatives. These also include the establishment of a National College for School leadership, National Standards for Headteachers and a National Professional Qualification for Headship, examples of what Ball (2003) refers to as 'performativity'. Gewirtz (2002) posits that there are two distinct eras that define

headship, deemed ‘welfarism’ and ‘new managerialism’ with the chronological period demarcated by the Education Reform Act of 1988.

There are various discourses that characterise headship in these two distinct eras. In terms of the latter, Thrupp & Willmott (2003) argue of a pervasive new managerialism in educational management that is intrinsically bound with the commodification and marketization of education most especially in England and consolidated globally. Thrupp & Willmott (2003) also contend that managerialism is not a positive force in education:

“It is not at all surprising then that advocates of managerialism in education are constrained by such (‘practical’) values as caring. This is the result of a necessary contradictory relation: child-centredness *per se* does not presuppose managerialism, yet managerialism (and managerialization) in education cannot eschew child-centredness (however crudely defined). The former is necessarily dependent upon the latter – it cannot work without it.” (Thrupp & Willmott 2003:29)

Therefore, it is apparent that this area requires pertinent research in terms of the extent to which managerialism has permeated headship in England and what the impact has been of any such permeation. The research enquiry therefore seeks to address this issue and also attempts to make a contribution to the wider field of educational leadership and management, which has grown hugely in recent decades. It also proffers some independent research to the realm of headship studies. Gunter and Forrester (2010^a) argue of the need for such studies:

“Much continues to be written about headship but again little of it is independently funded or designed.” (Gunter & Forrester 2010^a:64)

1.3 My Position as Researcher

I believe it is important to facilitate the reader with a brief description of my own professional context and background. I do not believe it is ever possible for a researcher to entirely dissociate themselves from the area that they have chosen to study and therefore candour and clarity are required. As Morrison (2002) eruditely explains:

“Some educational researchers may spend months, even years, convincing themselves and others that the techniques associated with their research endeavours are necessarily ‘objective’ whilst failing to recognise that the term ‘objectivity’ – being neutral, unbiased and making sure one’s personal values do not enter the research – is itself a value-implicit position in which it is assumed that there is a world ‘out there to be studied’.” (Morrison in Briggs & Coleman 2007:14)

Therefore, it is imperative that I explain my own context. Having qualified as a teacher, I moved overseas in 1999 working as an English teacher in two private schools in Turkey before moving to the United Arab Emirates in 2009 to work as an in-school advisor. I have resided in the Sultanate of Oman since 2012 and I am currently the headteacher at an Omani private school with an international curriculum.

My professional context makes the area that I am studying of interest and while I am a headteacher myself and also having gained the NPQH qualification enabling me to work as a headteacher in England, I have never been a headteacher in England. This puts me in the position of being able to both understand the role of the headteacher in conducting my research and writing about the topic but it also enabled me to be ‘naïve’ enough to seek further information and to remain carefully distanced, geographically, and in terms of exact local knowledge, from the headteachers whom I interviewed.

1.4 Structure of the Research Enquiry

The research enquiry is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 is a critical review and analysis of the literature pertinent to the substantive topic and begins by looking at headship in England in relation to the research question and sub-questions. These changes may be reflected in the given era's government's doctrine and its policy manifestation and therefore this area is analysed chronologically in order to show the progression from one government to the next and the manner in which their actions have impacted upon the role of headship in England.

The literature review then analyses the concept of managerialism and also looks at the evidence of its permeation in headship in England. It also examines the National College for School Leadership, the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the National Standards for Headteachers. This analysis is vital in terms of outlining the key arguments within the literature and to use the foundation of knowledge from the literature to underpin my research and with which I am able to compare and contrast the data garnered.

The chapter ends with an overview of the foundation that the literature review establishes and the positing of the literature review in the context of the research enquiry as a whole.

In **Chapter 3**, I outline my research methodology in conjunction with explanations pertaining to my epistemological and ontological positions as well as responding to the areas of validity, reliability, triangulation and generalisability. I then discuss my research approach, as well as the reasoning behind the interview schedule and sample.

I then outline the methodology of the study, along with a full explanation of how the data were analysed and the framework that was used for the analysis as well as the practicalities of the process of analysis. I finally detail the ethical procedures that I have conducted in compliance with the relevant guidelines, as well as measures I have taken to ensure that my professional, ethical and moral responsibility to the respondents supersedes all other considerations.

In **Chapter 4**, I explicate the results of my analysis. While presenting the research findings, I compare and contrast the findings with the literature review and seek to address the research questions and sub-questions.

The research findings chapter is structured in terms of themes that came to prominence during the data analysis. These themes are **Changes in Headship, Generic Leadership, Schools as Businesses, Government Policy, The Market and Parents**.

In **Chapter 5**, I conduct a brief discussion that reviews the research findings and relates them to the research aim and sub-questions. The intention of the discussion chapter is to conclude the research enquiry and provide clarification as to how the research questions and sub-questions have been addressed.

Chapter 6 offers an area for future research and my final thoughts.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 The Changing Role of Headship in England

In this chapter my intention is to critically review the areas of managerialism and headship in England, as well as related areas, in order to provide a clear focus and a solid foundation for the research that I am to conduct. This section also seeks to define and review the key research areas and establish the reasoning underpinning my decision to study them. The review also enables a critical analysis of current literature while concomitantly ensuring that my own work is not a mere replication of previous findings and that I am able to proffer something of worth to the field.

I will begin by examining headship in England and look at how the role of the headteacher has been impacted by national initiatives, policies and practices from 1944 to 2015. This will predominantly be constructed by way of a study of government policy. I will then conduct a review and analysis of the literature pertaining to managerialism, including the marketization of education. I will also look at the governmental initiatives that have been established in an attempt to ‘professionalise’ headship, these are the National College for School Leadership, the National Standards for Headteachers and the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the extent to which they may be manifestations of managerialism.

2.1.1 Headship Terms

In this section I will discuss the various terms used in reference to headship and my reason for using a particular term in preference to another. In reference to my research question and sub-questions it is important to examine the terms used to define this role, especially as I am examining changes in the role that may ultimately be reflected in the term that has been used.

It is clear that the term ‘headteacher’ is a somewhat anachronistic way in which to describe the role of headship. The plethora of management and middle management layers such as lead teachers, heads of departments, assistant heads and deputy heads render the term headteacher wholly unrelated to the actual job that this titleholder does. As Fielding (1997) notes,

“The role of the headteacher has changed dramatically in recent years. Once thought of as the senior professional – literally ‘head teacher’ – being head of a school is now a job for people who can lead and inspire significant numbers of colleagues – many of them highly qualified and trained – and also manage a complex internal and external environment.’ (Fielding 1997:1)

Green (2000) also recognises the complications of the term:

“Leaders of schools have been called Head, Headteacher, Headmaster, Headmistress, Principal and Chief Executive...It is often bewildering to the outsider as to why there are so many for what appears to be the same job.” (Green 2000:2)

Although recognising that the term headteacher is indeed unsuitable, Fielding (1997) gives a perspective on the role as being about ‘leading and inspiring’. As I shall discuss in this chapter, there are a multitude of tasks, competencies and skills that are seen as being the core of what the headteacher does. There is no simple definition to this continually evolving role and it is perhaps this ambiguity and lack of clarity that, ironically, leads to the term headteacher still being the most preferred.

It is clear that Jirasinghe and Lyons’s (1996) assessment of headship continues to ring true:

“Educational change is with us and will continue into the future. Within this context the job of the head who leads the school has altered and headship itself is undergoing a fundamental transformation (Jirasinghe and Lyons 1996:2)

I will therefore use the term ‘headteacher’ above others throughout this enquiry in order to ensure consistency rather than for any specific ideological presupposition to use one term over another. Headteacher is also the term that all of the respondents themselves use and in England the vast majority of schools refer to the position as the ‘headteacher’.

2.1.2 Headship in England from 1944-1988

The purpose of this section is to proffer a critical perspective of headship in England in terms of the historical background and development of the role and the manner in

which the perception of the role has changed, by way of a critical analysis of the pertinent literature. Whereas the headteachers that I interviewed had careers that spanned from the late-1970s onwards, I will proffer a brief review of the pertinent events impacting upon headship in England from the 1944 Education Act onwards.

This span of review is necessary in order to provide a clear context for the changes that were to come post-1988 and in order to ascertain the manner in which the headship role in England had previously been impacted upon by policy decisions and national debates. The review of literature in this area will be chronological although the critical analysis will proffer comparisons in a non-linear manner. As Gunter & Thomson (2010^b) argue:

“Historical study is not currently a part of formal training for teachers or headteachers, indeed, it has a fusty, unmodern image. The contemporary rhetoric is about the future where the past is a place not to visit; it is full of mistakes, inefficient practices, and unacceptable dispositions. A future good is posited as the binary other of a uniformly bad past. This construction neglects the ways in which both the past and the future are always being made in and as the present – not only the past, but all three are always with us.” (Gunter & Thomson 2010^b:216)

Changes in the perception of headship, changes in the role of the headteacher and changes in the socioeconomic make-up of headteachers are all indicative and reflective of developments within the education system as a whole and, in terms of perceptions, how society views headship

It is clear that that the 1944 Education Act, also known as the ‘Butler Act’, due to the influence of the Conservative minister Richard Austen Butler aka Rab, had a profound impact on England’s school system and on headship. The act effectively introduced a tripartite system with distinct manners of schooling with the destination of the given child being made in accordance with the 11+ examination:

“Three types of school of supposed equal value were established to cater to the needs of different children: grammar schools for those with academic aptitude, technical schools to provide industry with skilled personnel, and secondary modern schools for the rest.” (Blackburn & Marsh 1991:508)

It has been noted that the 1944 Act had within it elements of emancipatory ideology (Jones 2003) and Blackburn & March (1991) state:

“It reversed the general trend of growing inequality which was visible in the 1920s and 30s as those at the top increased their relative advantage over those immediately below them.” (Blackburn and March 1991:529)

Nevertheless, as my analysis will continue to highlight, for any elements outlined in the various governmental acts that I have discussed that may appear to have some prospect of addressing social inequality there are other areas in the acts that detract from any such initiatives. This was the case with the 1944 Act as it was with those before and after it, as Blackburn & March continue to argue:

“However, by replacing means-testing with universal provision, it increased equality at the bottom, presumably by benefitting those who had previously been most sensitive to financial obstacles. The former effect outweighed the latter, so overall inequality declined; the decline was, however, not dramatic and must surely have been less than hoped for. The gains in equality did not last, and we have seen that the trend set up by the Act was subsequently reversed” (ibid)

In reference to education in the 1950s, Jones (2003) notes:

“When it came to office in 1951, Churchill’s Government had immediately cut spending on education, with serious effect on the programme of replacing old school buildings and relieving education.” (Jones 2003:45)

In terms of the impact on the headteachers’ role, the job must clearly have been extremely difficult in the early post-war period with yet further cuts to education budgets. On the other hand, in terms of the curriculum, teachers were able to teach in a more unfettered manner than would be the case in later years. Headteachers were spared any of the subsequent major Acts of Parliament that brought about such wholesale change in other realms of social life during this period; perhaps this can be cited as ambivalence towards education from a government that had more pressing concerns during this period.

By 1964 a Labour government had come into power “committed to a second wave of reform, centring on economic regeneration.” (Jones 2003:75). As tempting as hyperbole regarding the changes in headship may be, the headship role remained consistent in spite of some of the changes outlined above.

Ironically, in spite of the reflection that this historical study may provide, headteachers did not always view it in this way. This is the one element that has remained constant. Headteacher, F.J. Goodwin, writing in 1968 stated that:

“Such ordinary times, alas, no longer exist and can only be numbered among the dear departed. Nowadays our headmaster is likely to face the added complications of part-time staff, shortage of staff and constant turnover of staff.” (Goodwin 1968:3)

In spite of the importance of the Plowden Report (1967), which called for ‘positive discrimination’, as well as a number of other extremely progressive reforms aimed at tackling inequality (Morley & Rassool 1999), it was the publication in 1969 of the first of the ‘Black Papers’ that raised greater debate.

The papers were a series of right wing essays dedicated to education matters. *The Fight for Education* and *The Crisis in Education* stirred the public debate and posited a perspective not in keeping with the atmosphere of liberal reform that occurred during the 1960s (e.g. divorce reform, the abolition of capital punishment and the decriminalisation of homosexuality).

Among the beliefs espoused in these essays was the idea that the concept of inherited intelligence was of significance in addressing inequality and deemed progressive education as “a main cause not only of student unrest in the universities but of other unwelcome tendencies or phenomena.” (Galton, Simon & Croll 1980:41).

Discourse regarding the role of the headteacher began to come to the fore with Gunter & Thomson (2010^b) noting that:

“...the role was seen by both policymakers and scholars of the time as located in nineteenth-century assumptions and practices, which had to be revised in the light of changed circumstances...The headteacher was seen as someone who should not be

directed in how to run the school, particularly from outside the school.” (Gunter & Thomson 2010^b:210)

The debate about education continued with the publication of the third paper, published in 1971, and although not referring to headteachers directly, these publications sought to posit the debate in opposition to the idea of progressive education. The ideas that were espoused were the perfect foundation for the Conservative Government of 1970 and especially Margaret Thatcher, the then Education Secretary. The previous Labour education minister Edward Short voiced a different opinion "In my view the publication of the Black Paper was one of the blackest days for education in the past century.” (Conservative History Journal 2013).

It was the ‘Great Debate’ speech by the Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan in 1976 at Ruskin College that had perhaps the greatest potential to proffer change and to counteract the beliefs espoused in the papers, beliefs that had come to the fore of educational debate in England. In spite of Callaghan’s desire for greater public debate in reference to education, this was a political manoeuvre aimed at further using education for political gains and, whether intentionally or not, juxtaposed the government’s position against the Black Papers and their ideological foundations while not considering the role of the headteacher.

The Black Papers, the Great Debate and changes in government heightened the politicisation of education. The consequence of party political obsession with education has been a great deal of uncertainty and change which may have caused schools increased difficulty and in terms of the headteacher’s role in particular the politicisation has undermined their daily practice and efforts by constantly changing the climate in which schools operate.

The one constant in the discourse of the political parties since the late 1970s, as I have discussed and upon which I will continue to elaborate below, is the notion that schools can succeed in spite of socioeconomic factors and simply that the socioeconomic deprivation of the student body is not seen as a barrier that should stop ‘good’ schools from ‘succeeding’.

In terms of the conjecture of the 1970s that I have discussed above, there are few sources detailing the exact manner in which this political discourse and any associated policies affected headteachers but these elements were certainly important factors when considering the field of education during this period and as a background in explaining how the vast changes that the 1980s brought about came into being. As Gunter & Thomson (2010^b) state:

“While the 1970s headteacher largely remains a creature of the nineteenth-century in post-war England, it is the case that debates were long established about their relationship with other staff and certainly about the need for heads.” (Gunter & Thomson 2010^b:213)

The pressures on heads remained constant from 1944 to 1988 so that no single period can necessarily be seen as a golden age or an age in which life was significantly better or worse for headteachers. However, the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) was to inflict the greatest changes on headteachers since the 1944 Education Act and it is this landscape-changing legislation that I will now examine.

2.1.3 The Education Reform Act of 1988

In reference to my research question and sub-questions, I shall outline the impact the 1988 Education Reform Act had upon the working lives of headteachers. Many elements introduced by the Act are, as I shall explain below, still relevant to this day and provide the foundation for managerialism in education as well as for the marketization of education, thereby impacting upon the headship role in England.

For Gewirtz (2002), the 1988 Education Reform Act produced a shift so great in school management that she has broadly defined the ‘before and after’ into two ‘epochs’, while of course recognising that the split ‘wasn’t clear cut’ but that ‘there are important features that distinguish the post-1988 period from the preceding era.’ (Gewirtz 2002:xi). Gewirtz deems these eras ‘welfarism’ and ‘post-welfarism’ and this latter epoch had an impact on headteachers, as Gewirtz (2002) notes:

“One of the consequences of post-welfarist policies in education has been to draw attention to, and enhance the role of, the headteacher, since headteachers play a key

part in shaping their school's response to the new policy environment." (Gewirtz 2002: xii)

Before continuing with a discussion of Gewirtz's vital distinction, I will give a brief overview of the 1988 ERA'S main provisions (Airasian & Gregory 1997):

- A national curriculum was mandated for all students aged 5-16.
- General achievement targets and narrower statements of attainment (objectives) were specified in each subject area to focus teaching and guide assessment.
- Teachers were required to assess their students formatively on an ongoing basis, while national performance-oriented Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) were to be administered annually to all students at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16.
- School-level SAT results were to be made public to foster school accountability and provide comparisons of student achievement among schools.
- Local education authorities (LEAs) were stripped of much of their power, which was devolved to local school head teachers or governors who obtained substantial control over budgeting and staffing within their own schools.

(Adapted from Airasian & Gregory 1997:307-308)

The Act intended, as shall be examined below, to drastically restructure state school education in England. Whereas it had several provisions, Maclure (1998) cites two underlying reasons for the provisions laid out within it:

"The first is the conventional top-down approach based on the Government's view of what needs to be done, and direct legal provisions to make this happen. The second is the rearrangement of the incentives within the system to create a simulated market in which consumer choice will force the providers to compete for custom and therefore raise their standards." (Maclure 1998:12)

The 1988 ERA also signalled a concerted effort at the Government level to focus on headteachers as the fulcrum of the school:

“The House of Commons Select Committee on Education investigated the role of the headteacher. The committee commented that ‘there seems to be a very high correlation between the behaviour of the headteacher and the progress and achievement of the people within the school’.” (Dunford et al 2000:1)

This recognition, paradoxically, did not provide headteachers with an unencumbered freedom to rule as they saw fit. Coulby and Bash (1991) state that in relation to the curriculum:

“So extensive are the powers given to the Secretary of State with regard to the school curriculum by the 1988 Act that it would seem as if there were almost no room for conflict.” (Coulby and Bash 1991:28)

Day et al (2003) also note the following elements as being forced upon schools and consequently headteachers as a result of the 1988 ERA:

“...increasing dependence upon curriculum, monitoring, assessment and inspection frameworks imposed by government, a performance and results-driven orientation that has the potential to create divisiveness, new forms of accountability which are intended to enhance effectiveness, but which simultaneously increase workload and bureaucracy.” (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford 2003:13)

As well as a perceived increase in parental choice and the act also developed a system of ‘judging’ schools publicly by way of league tables thereby pragmatically realising the concept of ‘failing’ schools and explicitly created a market in which schools were to ‘compete’ in a fundamentally unsound attempt to eliminate the perceived lack of quality teaching in schools and supposedly enhance equality of choice. As Fergusson (1994) states:

“The [ERA] sought to establish the conditions for a competitive market in publicly funded school provision and for parents to exercise choice in a free market.” (Fergusson in Clarke, Cochrane & McLaughlin 1994:98)

The introduction of league tables was a huge factor in creating the environment within which parents felt that they had choice and in creating quasi-market conditions but had a noticeably negative impact. As Hoyle & Robinson (2003) note:

“We have seen, under the assumptions of our model, that the use of league tables has the potential to cause an entrenched social division between schools (even when all the schools are, in fact, identical).” (Hoyle & Robinson 2003:118)

As Coulby and Bash (1991) contend:

“There is little evidence that the ERA is providing a structure that will ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and some evidence that the reforms further disadvantaging those unable to compete in the market they are intended to foster.” (Coulby & Bash 1991:84)

The Act also ensured that an unsubstantiated perception of unprofessionalism and incompetence in teaching was ‘addressed’. Ball (2007) notes that the Act sought to address ‘suspicion of teacher professionalism’ and the ‘politics of teachers’ and the need for ‘systems of control and accountability.’ Lauder (1990) conducting research into similar ideological manoeuvrings in New Zealand spoke of “a New Right revolution whose language of ‘consumers’ and ‘producers’ has already permeated far into education.” (Lauder & Wylie 1990:12). His analysis proved to be a prophetic harbinger of an ideological manifestation with which educationalists are still familiar a quarter of a century later.

As stated above, for Gewirtz (2002), this was a period in which education being split into two epochs with fundamentally different forms of discourse and fundamentally oppositional ideological aims and outcomes namely the period of ‘welfarism’ before the ERA and ‘new managerialism’ in the period since 1988 (Gewirtz 2002:32).

Table 1: Main characteristics of Welfarism and New Managerialism

<i>Welfarism</i>	<i>New Managerialism</i>
Public-service ethos	Customer-oriented ethos
Decision driven by commitment to ‘professional standards’ and values e.g., equity, care, social justice	Decisions instrumentalist and driven by efficiency. Cost effectiveness, search for competitive edge
Emphasis on collective relations with employees – through trade unions	Emphasis on individual relations – through marginalisation of trade unions and new management techniques, e.g., Total Quality Management (TQM), Human Resource Management (HRM)
Consultative	Authoritarian/macho
Substantive rationality	Technical rationality
Cooperation	Competition
Managers socialised within field and values of specific welfare sector, e.g., education, health, social work	Managers generically socialised, i.e., within field and values of ‘management’

Gewirtz (2002:32)

Gewirtz’s analysis is pertinent in terms of how it both analysed what preceded her writing and what has come to pass since. In terms of Gewirtz’s **first characteristic**, it is clear that headteachers now perform in a manner that is customer-oriented and while the discourse may not always overtly use such terminology, school performance is now judged quantitatively by way of examination results and such quantitative categorisation is indicative of a move from a public service ethos.

The **second characteristic**, namely concentrating on efficiency, is also recognisable in the current discourse of headship with value for money being of great importance and the huge surge to restructure England’s state schools as academies amplifies this point with the key aim being to allow schools to become ‘cost efficient’. Such moves further seek to ensure schools are run in accordance with a business model and subsequently impact greatly upon the role of headship.

In reference to Gewirtz’s **third characteristic**, it is ironic that perhaps the greatest shift in how ‘Total Quality Management’ has been implemented in England’s state schools is the ‘deprofessionalization’ of the headteachers by way of the standardisation of headship as will be outlined below in Section 2.2.5. Whereas

teachers have always had specific modes of training and attempts at standardising their practice, it was not until 2000 that such elements become prevalent for headteachers in England via a carefully constructed process implemented by the New Labour government and perpetuated by successive policy since.

As Gewirtz notes, the distinctions between the two phases are at times nebulous and it could be argued that the role of the headteacher was traditionally seen as an authoritarian/ macho role. However, it is clear that in the epoch of 'welfarism' the role was more 'consultative'. Therefore, Gewirtz's **fourth characteristic** is certainly reflected by the rise of the 'superhead' under New Labour. The ideological assumptions underpinning the promulgation of superheadism are at a certain level bound up in the belief in the 'trait leadership' perspective of organizational management that which Gewirtz refers to as 'authoritarian/macho' leadership.

The term 'superhead' first came into being as a result of New Labour's education policy. As Araujo (2009) notes:

"This 'drastic measure' to tackle underachievement in 'failing schools' became part of Labour's 'zero tolerance of underperformance' relying heavily on headteachers or 'superheads'." (Araujo 2009:600)

Orchard (2002) clearly iterates the problems associated with this perspective of headship:

"There are problems associated with relying too heavily on the power and influence of a single person, as studies of charismatic leadership have highlighted. There is a tremendous de-skilling effect on other people within an organization led by one dominant personality. Leaders who operate in this way create a herd of followers who are not allowed to take responsibility for themselves. Their ability to innovate or initiate can be stifled and the organization as a whole does not grow as it might." (Orchard 2002:167)

Gewirtz's **fifth characteristic** relates to the shift from substantive to technical rationality. A distinguishing feature is the diminution of autonomy and the development of procedural solutions to carefully defined problems. Again the

deprofessionalization of headship is evidence of technical rationality. Indeed, movements such as ‘school development and improvement’ are resultant of a shift towards technical rationality in which self-prophesized solutions proffer headteachers a way in which to do things that may best fit with a nationally propagated view of school organization and management.

This *modus operandi* is contrary to the other factors that may constrain schools from being able to ‘improve’, these factors including the socioeconomic status of the student body and the specific characteristics of the school. The cruel irony is that the nature of market conditions can often be the cause of school ‘underachievement’, driving government policy and funding, as well as providing an ideological foundation for the skewed criteria for judging performance.

Gewirtz **sixth characteristic** refers to the impact of competition on the headship role and this clearly relates back to the need for the headteacher to be customer focused and also relates clearly to the concept of school markets that will be referred to in greater depth below. Finally, Gewirtz’s **seventh characteristic** sees managerialism as necessitating the socialization of headteachers in the realm of management and a manifestation of this can be seen in the standardisation of the headship by way of a national college, national qualification and national standards as will be discussed in Section 2.2.5 below. As Gewirtz concludes:

“The work of the new manager may well not be informed by any of the ‘old’ welfare values which characterized much educational thinking and practice in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.” (ibid: 31)

The changes outlined above are of major significance in reflecting the manner in which the changes to the working lives of state school headteachers have been directly affected by the policies and subsequent Acts of Parliament resultant from the party political ideologies of the given government. It is clear that the ‘seismic changes’ (Bush 2003:ix), which came about as a result of the ERA, were incomparable to previous epochs in the way in which they affected and fundamentally changed the role of the headteacher, as well as changing the face of education in England.

2.1.4 New Labour (1997-2010)

In the previous section, I analysed the work of Gewirtz (2002) in outlining an ideological shift in the manner in which the role of the headship changed in England. This began to touch upon the elements of policies that the New Labour government appended with its own ideological bent. In this section I will further elucidate upon the role of the headteacher under the New Labour government.

As much as the 1988 ERA affected and continued to affect the working lives of headteachers, the New Labour government saw a prolonged period of upheaval, uncertainty and change, driven by a well-manifested belief in the marketization of education. The education policies were indeed new and not reflective of the rather more progressive and egalitarian Labour policies pre-1995, in spite of oft repeated rhetoric to the contrary.

The most memorable pronouncement on the importance of education to New Labour, came during Tony Blair's (Prime Minister from 1997-2007) speech, "Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you: education, education, education." (Blair: Speech to the Labour Party conference, October 1996^a).

Blair's pre-election pronouncements on education continued:

"A New Labour government will focus on standards, especially in the basics of literacy and numeracy, in all our schools. We will expect education - and other public services - to be held accountable for their performance." (Blair: Ruskin College speech, December 1996^b)

Within this brief excerpt are examples of the fundamental way in which New Labour had shifted its party's traditional focus on education from a position of welfarism to managerialism (in accordance with the criteria outlined by Gewirtz). The use of terms such as 'standards' and 'accountable' clearly indicate that there was an assumption that such elements were absent and that schools had to be 'held to account' rather than supported, leading to further pressures on headteachers. New Labour immediately produced a White Paper and this ostensibly echoed Blair's words and confirmed the approach that the government was to take:

“This Government’s first White Paper on education, Excellence in Schools (DfEE, 1997), suggested that it intended to distance itself from the language of the private sector, of markets and competition... While there is some evidence of this... other initiatives, such as contracting the management of certain LEAs and schools to private companies and headteacher performance and review, fly in the face of it.” (Anderson 2001:59)

The espoused ‘Third Way’ as exhibited in Labour’s approach to education was invariably a continuation of the market model and in this model, in spite of any pronouncements to the contrary, with regard to the emancipatory ideals of the given reform, the ‘market’, as I shall examine below, necessitates ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. This is a model that does not really consider, let alone address, socioeconomic deprivation.

In 1998, New Labour produced another document clearly stating the role that headteachers were expected to play in the new system of schooling:

“In ‘Teachers: Meeting the challenge of change (DfEE, 1998)’ the government outlined the need for a new professionalism, headteachers to be organisational leaders, headteachers and teachers to be better trained and for performance-related pay to replace peer appraisal.” (Gunter & Forrester 2010^a:60)

Once again, there was an assumption posited by the New Labour government of a lack of professionalism and training. The reference to performance related pay also firmly entrenched New Labour’s stance in line with that of its Conservative predecessors. These points, combined with New Labour’s position on the manner of teaching, are recognised by Gewirtz (2000):

“New Labour’s policy architects advocate the use of markets in education, they are committed to the managerialization of schooling, they promote pedagogic traditionalism and they want to inculcate individual responsibility.” (Gewirtz 2000:310)

The educational policies of New Labour continued to promote the marketization of education and further reduce a much-needed focus on issues of social welfare and

eradicating inequality. Headteachers may have assumed that the welfarist ideologies espoused by previous Labour governments were more conducive to an egalitarian model of education than that consistently applied by the Conservatives. However, as Anderson (2001) argues:

“The point is that New Labour has taken an agnostic view with regard to educational structures. Instead of working on the basis that the automatic consequence of redressing social inequality is a diminution of opportunities for the advantaged, it has taken the view that there are alternative approaches. (Anderson 2001:65-66)

The way in which importance was to be placed on standards as advocated in Blair’s pre-electoral speech also came to fruition with the consolidation of overt attempts to rank schools:

“The Labour Government has not made significant changes to the publication of examination results and like the Conservative Government before it has linked the publication of school performance tables (or ‘league tables’) directly with parental choice.” (West & Pennell 2000:219)

The problem with such tables is that they fail to take into consideration any of the differing circumstances that schools may face and they offer absolutely no response or solution to other factors that are prevalent in influencing a school’s ‘performances’. As Ainscow (2010) recognised, writing at the end of Labour’s 13-year tenure:

“The standards agenda has concentrated on a narrow view of attainment in a way that has tended to discourage the participation and learning of some groups of learners.” (Ainscow 2010:75-76)

New Labour’s excessive bureaucracy was also problematic for headteachers:

“The most concerning aspects are that [National Association of Head Teachers] members have to deal with heightened levels of red tape and have problems in planning and controlling their workloads.” (Daniels and French, 2006:3)

In spite of these criticisms of the New Labour ‘education movement’, there was support for New Labour’s educational policy and Whitty (2009) argues that:

“In fairness to New Labour, the importance of addressing the continuing failure of disadvantaged pupils was actually recognised by Estelle Morris as early as 2001 (DfES, 2001) and later given a particular emphasis by Ruth Kelly (Education and Skills Committee, 2006).” (Whitty 2009:274)

However, in conducting an analysis of the party manifestos of both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party from 1979 to 2010, Souto-Otero (2011) concludes:

“While an increasing emphasis on education became a defining characteristic of Labour, which communicated its messages more emphatically and clearly than did the Conservatives, Labour’s message became nonetheless more an abridged version of the Conservatives’ and less a reflection of Labour’s own identity and singularity than in the past.” (Souto-Otero 2011:307)

Having conducted a review of how New Labour’s education policies impacted upon the professional practice of headteachers in England, I will now discuss the educational policies of the Liberal Democrat-Conservative Coalition government of 2010 to 2015 and the manner in which these policies influenced the headship role in England.

2.1.5 The Liberal Democrat-Conservative Coalition (2010-2015)

The Liberal Democrat-Conservative Government was elected in May 2010 and the predictable politicization of education began with a series of reforms and a White Paper that continued the seemingly obligatory inclination of using educational policy as a purveyor of party political doctrine. It was immediately apparent that the Coalition’s policies were similar to those of the previous government:

“New Labour and Coalition governments’ approaches to education reform are characterised by continuity in neo-liberal thinking...Neo-liberal approaches to governance emphasise management, standardisation, performativity, bureaucratic structures and procedures, competition, cost cutting and efficiency.” (Bates 2012:90)

The immediate actions included such acts as abolishing the value added league tables which were meant to compensate in some way to allow schools to be recognised for the socioeconomic intake. Such acts as this so early in the government's term were a clear indication of the policies that were to follow. There was also a continued perpetuation of marketization of education thereby, in reference to the current study, placing further emphasis on the role of the headteacher by the aggressive push of schools to academies thereby further decentralising school provision.

As of the end of the 2013/2014 school year there were 3,980 academies (Department of Education 2015^b:12) in England, whereas there were only three in 2002 (Worth 2015:2) and the inevitable development of schools being run for profit had come to fruition with a huge growth in privately sponsored academy chains.

In terms of what the Coalition's policies meant for teachers, Page (2013) states:

“Here, then, we see the effect of simultaneous decentralisation and centralisation in the reform of teacher discipline: the management of incompetence is devolved to schools but the rigour of the panoptic is increased. Heads can manage incompetence but, in a simultaneous show of distrust, their effectiveness at this task can be inspected at any moment without hardly any notice.” (Page 2013:243)

Decentralisation is paradoxically intriguing, as it may appear that removal of bureaucracy and the provision of extra ‘freedom’ would be desirable elements for headteachers. However, decentralisation is not conducted in a collaborative manner with input from those upon whom the impact will be greatest. Decentralisation is completed in accordance with a clearly defined ideological perspective and with clearly defined policy manoeuvrings at its core.

Michael Gove, the first coalition Minister for Education, began the predictable foray into a polemic disparaging low educational standards and developing policies aimed at changing educational policy with little reference to sound research or evidence. The rhetoric followed on seamlessly from the words of Tony Blair in 1996. As Hoskins (2012) contends:

“Labour maintained imagery of modernity and values of inclusion; the Coalition

Government is concerned with tradition, academic values and elites. Thus, there is continuity between New Labour and the Coalition Government in terms of advocating markets and effectiveness in education, but discontinuity in terms of inclusion and resources.” (Hoskins 2012:10)

As with Blair, the rhetoric included justification for the reforms being based in the need to help every child and to drive up standards for all, but as Young (2011) notes:

“Michael Gove’s proposals endorse a universalistic principle – subjects treat all learners equally – but he neglects the reality that schools in a capitalist society are located in a non-universalist context. Opportunities to acquire ‘powerful knowledge’ are not equally distributed across schools, and better qualified teachers, who are more likely to promote such acquisition, will always drift towards schools with higher-achieving pupils.” (Young 2011:276)

Indeed, further policies such as the promotion of free schools did nothing to address socioeconomic deprivation:

“The government makes specific claims for the benefits of free schools for raising standards and reducing educational inequality in socially deprived areas...the balance of evidence is that free schools are in general unlikely to be more effective in this respect than comparable mainstream schools, and some may increase social segregation, on grounds of social class, ethnicity or religion.” (Hatcher 2011:500)

For the headteacher the way in which these ‘reforms’ were introduced brought greater pressures to their daily practice and there can be no greater evidence of this than the National Association of Head Teachers passing a vote of no confidence in Michael Gove in 2013. This followed on from similar no confidence votes by the main teaching unions. Gove extended his focus to wider society and his views, so oft bound with pronouncements of future policy initiatives, were reported in the print media with undue constancy. An excerpt of one of Gove’s speeches exemplified his anachronistic views:

“We should recover something of that Victorian earnestness which believed that an

audience would be gripped more profoundly by a passionate hour long lecture from a gifted thinker which ranged over poetry and politics than by cheap sensation and easy pleasures.” (Gove: Cambridge Speech 2011)

My assertion here is not intended to target the party political whims of a given politician but to highlight the manner in which discourses in reference to education are replicated and subsequently manifested in policy reform and Acts of Parliament. These clearly affect the role of the headteacher and their working lives with greater force than any other members of the school community. Although headteachers were promised:

“We will give head teachers greater freedoms to reward good performance and address poor performance.” (DfE 2010^a:25)

Gove’s, now defunct, Twitter account clearly illustrated the mixed communications that were sent to headteachers:

“25/08/2011: Michael Gove @Michael_Gove: Head teachers [sic] and teachers need more respect – let’s start the new academic year with respect for heads and their staff [sic]

The bonhomie and veneration were less apparent a few months later:

“08/12/2011: Michael Gove @Michael_Gove: Headteachers – I’m tired. Please stop fighting the academy agenda. It will happen [sic]

The ‘Troops for Teacher’ programme was an indication of the government’s perception of ‘traditionally trained’ teachers and a signal of doubt in the country’s headteachers’ ability to select and train their own staff, as well as doubting their ability to maintain an ‘orderly’ school, hence demands to literally ‘call in the army’. However, as Tipping (2013) contends,

“Troops to Teachers looks more about an elitist moral panic and conservative fears of a frightening underclass, rather than a serious, enlightened and comprehensive policy to address material, cultural and educational disadvantage. (Tipping 2013:9)

The impact of these reforms and the relentless stream of media sound bites

pertaining to England's schools led to increased stress for headteachers and, as indicated by the no confidence vote, the policies and the plans for future change were not conducive to the effectiveness of headteachers' daily practice or to the redevelopment of the nation's schools as agents addressing inequality and improving the life chances of their students. As Adams (2011) claims:

“Once again social and structural influences are stripped away to reveal a belief in the individual as the engineer of educational success.” (Adams 2011:477)

Under the Coalition government, there were mixed messages for headteachers with rhetoric of devolution and autonomy paradoxically positioned against centralised interference with pedagogy and curriculum. These were all wholly indicative of the shift from welfarism to new managerialism of which Gewirtz (2002) spoke more than a decade earlier.

In May 2015, the Coalition of 2010-2015 came to end, and a Conservative government was elected. It seems thus far that there is no change in the education policies or the ideological position of the new government to those outlined above.

In conclusion, the preceding section has sought to provide an analysis of how policy changes based on political ideology and the continued politicization of education have impacted on the headship role in England. This background analysis will be vital in terms of comparing and contrasting the opinions of my respondents and in examining how such changes manifest in the working lives of headteachers and how they manage such issues.

2.2 Managerialism, Markets & Manifestations

The purpose of this section is to articulate a key debate concerning the current status of managerialism in education in England and the manner in which it affects headteachers. This section aims to both provide the reader with a thorough analysis of the argument while allowing for the central debate to be juxtaposed against the perceptions of the headteachers I interviewed in order to provide a comprehensive response to the research question and sub-questions.

2.2.1 Definition: What is Managerialism?

Locke (2009) defines managerialism as:

“What occurs when a special group, called management, ensconces itself systematically in an organisation and deprives owners and employees of their decision-making powers (including the distribution of emoluments) – and justifies that takeover on grounds of the managing group’s education and exclusive possession of codified bodies of knowledge and know-how necessary to the efficient running of the organization.’ (Locke 2009:28)

The definition above outlines a variety of elements that I shall analyse in the proceeding section but for now it is utilised for clarity. It may seem that the definition is primarily referring to businesses but when schools are treated as though they are businesses they become vulnerable to the unwelcome influence of managerialism. As Thrupp and Willmott (2003) argue:

“Education is a public good that is undermined by marketization and (new) managerialism, in turn (and with depressing irony) undermining the very national competitiveness such processes and mechanisms are meant to enhance and encourage.” (Thrupp & Willmott 2003:13)

This definition deems managerialism as a baneful concept referring to it as an ideology that is intrinsically contrary to the purpose of schools as institutions that provide their students with increased life chances as well as being places of haven for young people in which they can discover their talents and find their place in the World.

In 2003, Thrupp & Willmott used the term ‘new managerialism’ albeit with the prefix ‘new’ in parenthesis. It is perhaps indicative of the pervasiveness of the term that more than a decade after Thrupp & Willmott’s publication, the ‘new’ has become superfluous. It should also be noted that the definition with which I wish to proceed has been subject to change:

“A more nuanced conceptualisation of managerialism has gradually replaced the former polarised vision.” (Teelken 2012:272)

Handy (1984) supports the concept that denotes the organizational structure of schools can mirror that of business:

“Schools have much in common with other organizations that bring people together for a purpose – be they hospitals, or businesses or government offices.” (Handy 1984:26)

This generalised view of education extends the questionable argument that all types of organisation are the same and this is the central tenet of managerialism. Clarke & Newman (1997) state:

“The knowledge of managerialism is ‘universalist’, applicable to all organisations rather than substantive and specific.” (Clarke & Newman 1997:66)

I will now examine from where the basis for the belief in a generalised managerial approach originated and examine how the foundations of the movement may have shaped the ways in which managerialism is manifested.

2.2.2 A Brief History of Managerialism

Locke and Spender (2011) trace the inception of managerialism back to the mid-twentieth century as a result of the economic boom of the 1950s. Although the foundations were a result of management science and an intrinsic relation to business, the belief that schools have within them commonalities with business has been stated for many decades. Morley & Rassool (1999) recognise the shift in educational discourse:

“The concepts of quality and effectiveness reconstructed within the context of economic realities of the mid-1970s, implicitly, served to legitimate a redefined role for schooling and education.” (Morley & Rassool 1999:26)

The history of managerialism may be seen as reflected in or in parallel with the growth of ‘Business Schools’. The ‘one size fits all training’ approach of businesspeople has within it a self-fulfilling prophecy insofar as it necessitates an immovable way of seeing the world that can be readily translated into rigid courses of study. The fact that MBAs evolved into the standard qualification for any businessperson wishing to step onto the next financially rewarding rung of the

corporate ladder, strengthened the business schools both financially and in terms of their pervading reputations. As Locke and Spender (2011) note,

“Managerialism as opposed to management means a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions and thought associated with but nonetheless transcending the need for the efficient running of commercial and industrial organizations.” (Locke & Spender 2011:18)

Business schools have sought invest these customs, interests and thoughts by the development of programmes able to attract the very people, those ostensibly motivated by financial reward, who will replicate the ideology in terms of the carefully constructed knowledge and skills that they have been afforded on near identical programmes at a variety of business schools, now stretching across the globe both physically and, increasingly abundant, in cyberspace. This assertion is supported by Parker (2002):

“The point of business school, for its external customers, is to validate existing practice, or invigorate it with thrilling new language...[it] functions as a trade school cash cow providing cow sociology for cash-strapped universities.” (Parker 2002:13)

As the reputations of the business schools and their proliferation of courses grew, the strength of managerialism intensified. Indeed, in reference to education, MBAs in Educational Leadership courses began to proliferate although they often seemed to disappear just as quickly.

In referring the discussion back to an educational perspective of the foundations of managerialism, Gewirtz (2002) uses the term ‘post-welfarism’ to refer to the period in which the shift towards a business perspective of school management became prevalent. Gewirtz also argues that a result of this ideological shift manifests itself by emphasising the headship role as a predominant factor in the changing discourse as well the proliferation of ‘school improvement’ and the discourse of ‘failing’ schools.

The evolution of managerialism in English education is undoubtedly exhibited in various governmental reforms and the introduction of policies outlined above most

pertinently the 1988 Education Reform Act, the concentration on education by New Labour from 1997 until 2009 and by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition which, as previously stated, introduced a raft of changes that possessed at their core managerialist ideologies and were bound with managerialist discourse.

This managerialist discourse and its associated practices have been presented in a palatable manner and have been carefully explicated and well-developed by successive governments as a response to clearly stated problems. These arguments were outlined above by way of a review of government policy from 1988 until 2015. It is of course wholly rational for governments to have a definitive education policy and that such policy will reflect the ideological perspective of the government.

Indeed, for writers such as Hanushek (2015), the role of knowledge, and therefore schooling, is of huge importance in ensuring the economic prosperity of nations.

Policies that may be deemed as managerialist such as school accountability, choice & competition and incentives are recommended by Hanushek (2015:194-196) in order to increase student outcomes:

“While being cautious about specific details, existing evidence suggests some clear general policies related to the institutional structure of school systems are important. Foremost, the performance of a system is affected by the incentives and disincentives actors receive. That is, if the actors in the education process are rewarded (extrinsically and intrinsically) for producing better student achievement, and if they are penalized for not producing high achievement, achievement is likely to improve. (Hanushek 2015:194)

It is on the premise of such theoretical foundations that education policy has been based not just in England but globally. The implementation of performance related pay and incentivization for schools undoubtedly have managerial roots. The concept of teachers being judged and rewarded solely on the results attained by their students in spite of other mitigating factors is clearly one that appeals to managerial perspectives and proffers a linear, simplistic view of schooling that is often politically agreeable.

In the next section I will analyse critiques of managerialism in order to ascertain the manner in which it may be seen as counterproductive to the common goals of education and the ways in which it is perceived as a key factor in the destabilization of state school provision and by association the impact it has on the headship role in England.

2.2.3 Criticisms of Managerialism

In this section I will examine the criticisms of managerialism and the subsequent consequences that are cited as a result of the increased pervasiveness of managerial practices at the school level and the development and implementation of policies, as well as initiatives, that are at their core a reflection of a managerial position. Again, such policies can clearly be traced back to the political changes referred to above.

The criticisms of managerialism are magnified if we consider the impact that any negative consequences may have on young people affected by any given managerial driven school system. Perhaps the only realm in which the negative results of managerialist practices would have a greater debilitating effect on the individuals within the system would be in the realm of health care, an area that has itself been subject to the influence of managerial practices (Ling 1999).

Some of the criticisms of managerialism are that it is based on a theoretical premise that ignores debilitating social factors such as socioeconomic deprivation, it disregards the importance of the individual and indiscriminately uses general management practices without considering the consequences that they may have on schools (Thrupp & Willmott 2003). It is clear that managerialist techniques are intrinsically linked and inseparable from the belief in the marketization of education, because these positions assume that schools are more effective if they are managed in accordance with a business model.

Indeed, Thrupp & Willmott (2003) continue to note that post-welfarist education reform (ostensibly intertwined with the evolution of managerialism) has:

“...reduced the educational breadth of schools both directly through curriculum prescription and indirectly through its emphasis on outcomes, the intensification of workloads and the impact of market pressures.” (Thrupp & Willmott 2003:40)

In a climate that encourages managerialist discourses and practices, schools, while not acting immorally or in a manner unbecoming of welfare institutions, are nonetheless required to perform in a certain manner when placed in a market arena. They are compelled to conform with market specific modes of behaviour such as marketing, re-branding and establishing a corporate identity.

Evidently there are some assumptions made about markets that are naïve, but such is the methodical manner in which managerialism and markets have entered the realm of education, it would be difficult to imagine that the assumptions had not been critically considered.

In terms of the impact of managerialism on teachers, O'Brien and Down (2002) discovered:

“Teachers in this case study believed that corporate reforms of the kind outlined earlier are not only inappropriate for education, but significantly, make little difference to children’s learning.” (O'Brien & Down 2002:117)

They continue:

“Teachers talked about the hidden political and ideological agenda, the economic imperative and unfamiliar values they saw being promoted by the reform process.” (ibid)

Robinson (2011) also notes the way in which managerialism has resulted in government policy and everyday school practice becoming inseparable:

“I can’t imagine that it would be an easy thing for schools to develop or change just because they want to unless it fits with the government’s ideas.” (Robinson 2011:68)

The literature continues to reiterate the message that schools are caught up in a paradox of external pressures and an overriding desire to do their best for their students. As Noordegraaf & De Wit (2012) explain:

“It seems that the added value of reforms for teachers is an important criterion for assessing managerial influences and initiatives. School managers want to do justice to teachers and pupils. When managerialism affects this in a negative way, it might

result in conflicting loyalties.” (Noordegraaf & De Wit 2012:965)

Clarke & Newman (1997) cite the following problematic results of managerial practices as stated by their respondents:

“They have talked about the difficulties of being constantly asked to make efficiency savings, of responding to a ‘can do’ climate of policy making and of working in a context of low and declining trust between public, politicians and managers.”
(Clarke & Newman 1997:10)

The shift towards a managerialist perspective of the headship role has clearly created different school environments and is represented in different practices. Without doubt the literature reflects the way in which managerialism has affected those working in schools and further evidence of the pressures that have been placed on headteachers is recognised by Fergusson (in Clarke et al 1994):

“On the one hand he [*sic*] is isolated from the decisions about what is specified; on the other hand he [*sic*] is heavily monitored in this task.” (Clarke, Cochrane & McLaughlin 1994:103)

As I have discussed above, these changes are clearly reflected in the changes of discourse used in reference to what may most simply be referred to as ‘educational management’ although even this simple term is loaded with ideological assumptions. As Gewirtz & Ball (2000) argue:

“The new management discourse in education emphasises the instrumental purpose of schooling – raising standards and performance as measured by examination results, levels of attendance and school-leaver destinations – and is frequently articulated within a lexicon of enterprise, excellence, quality and effectiveness.”
(Gewirtz & Ball 2000:255)

The link between markets and managerialism is strong. In a ‘welfarist’ conception of education, schools are seen as part of a bureaucratic state structure whereas in a managerialist or ‘post-welfarist’ perspective, schools are seen as business and seen as autonomous thereby allowing them to become part of a market system. Ball (2007) explains:

“New managerialism is the logical concomitant of the market and the logical antidote to the ‘failings’ of public sector bureaucracy and culture.” (Ball 2007:25)

The market and managerialism feed each other as the stampede for ‘good’ schools necessitates that such schools are managed and organised in a certain manner and according to a certain set of principles that will make them more attractive to the parent or that which may ostensibly be referred to as the ‘customer’ or ‘consumer’. Ball (2007) continues to define this system as ‘the competition state writ small.’ (ibid).

It is an exploration of the marketization of education to which I shall now direct this discussion.

2.2.4 Markets

Gorard, Taylor & Fitz (2003) note one argument that is used to support the idea of the value of education markets is that:

“Markets, by reducing bureaucratic rules and procedures enable families and individuals to make choices previously not open to them, including seeking a better quality of service elsewhere.” (Gorard, Taylor & Fitz 2003:15)

The vision of the market is indeed addictive and seems to instil a sense of fairness and order as the needs of every child are supposedly met due to the open market of choice. However, the actualisation of markets in education is somewhat less palatable and the bond between managerialism and marketization is intertwined. As Woods, Bagley & Glatter (1998) states:

“Markets in education, like all markets, are not a natural phenomenon, nor do they operate in isolation.” (Woods, Bagley & Glatter 1998:135)

The initial impetus for increasing parental choice may first be seen with some elements pertaining to admissions in the 1980 Education Act and further strengthened by the Greenwich Judgment of 1989 which stated that schools may not give children places based only on where they happen to live. However, the link between this Act and Judgement and managerialism is less

tenuous and the motivations for them less contrived. These changes had more to do with geographical difficulties and, in the case of the Greenwich Judgement, a desire to offer genuine choice that superseded LEA boundaries.

As sated above, it was the 1988 Education Reform Act that truly enabled market conditions and the market had been further empowered since that time by a clamour for school places, as Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe (1995) argue:

“The education market is intended to be driven by self-interest: first, the self-interest of parents, as consumers, choosing schools that will provide maximum advantage to their children; second, the self-interest of schools or their senior managers, or producers, in taking policy decisions that are based upon ensuring that their institutions thrive, or at least survive in the marketplace.” (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe 1995:2)

The market in the business world operates in markedly different conditions with vastly different results to that of a market model for schools. In the education market, the problem is that when the ‘successful’ school reaches its full capacity, the ‘customers’ will have nowhere to go other than the ‘failing’ school which unlike any other given commercial enterprise does not immediately cease to trade but must continue a moribund existence bound with public ridicule, unable to recruit staff, or receive adequate funding.

Meanwhile, the successful school’s survival necessitates that it gains further students as places become available, as Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (ibid) state:

“The demand for school places is inelastic, that is, the number of potential students is fixed...survival can only be ensured by attracting consumers away from other schools.” (ibid).

In the next section, I will analyse the formation of the National College for School Leadership, the development of the National Standards for Headteachers and the

design, introduction and implementation of the National Professional Qualification for Headship. I believe that these three initiatives borne out of the policies of New Labour and propagated by the Coalition Government offer further evidence of the shift from welfarism to new managerialism as outlined by Gewirtz (2002).

2.2.5 National College, National Standards and National Qualification

The purpose of this section is to continue to analyse the literature pertaining to the manner in which the role of headship has changed by way of an understanding of National College for School Leadership [currently named the National College for Teaching and Leadership] the National Standards for Headteachers [currently named the National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers] and the National Professional Qualification for Headship, as these are evidence of how successive governments have attempted to overtly influence the headship role in England.

2.2.5.1 The National College for School Leadership

Gewirtz (2002) argues that one of the key characteristics of post-welfarist educational policy is that it has “...constructed a new role for headteachers that is characterised by shifts in focus, style, practices and language.” (Gewirtz 2002:27). A manifestation of this has been the establishment of the National College for School Leadership, which has existed, albeit with varying names, since 2000 and was first conceived in the 1998 Green Paper ‘Teachers meeting the Challenges of Change’ (Department of Education and Employment, 1998).

The New Labour government formally established the National College for School Leadership in 2000 with its £28 million ‘Learning & Conference Centre’ opened by Tony Blair in 2002. The Department for Education original description of the college’s purpose was as follows:

“The NCSL has been charged with overseeing the development of leadership training for managers in schools.” (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate 2002:18)

The Secretary of State for Education at the time of the College’s establishment, David Blunkett, stated that the College was tasked with the following agenda:

“[1] to provide a single, national focus for school leadership development and research; [2] to be a driving force for world class leadership in our schools and the wider education service; [3] to be a provider and promoter of excellence; a major resource for schools; a catalyst for innovation; and a focus for national and international debate on school leadership issues.” (Southworth 2004:340)

The New Labour government overtly stated that it founded the College in order for it to have a positive impact on headteachers and on schools. Blunkett’s reference to the way in which the College was purportedly an institution intending to provide a research focus was supported by Professor Geoff Southworth, the Strategic Director of Research and Deputy CEO at the NCSL from 2002 until 2008, who states:

“The College also has visiting professors and scholars who inform our work, extend the frames of our reference and challenge our assumptions, customs and habits.” (ibid:349)

However, the NCSL in its day to day leadership and by way of the design of the programmes that it offered, had little input from English universities’ education departments and in Southworth’s comments there is tacit reference to the belief that the College is ostensibly detached from the academic world as evidenced by its ‘visiting’ professors, the ambiguous reference to ‘scholars’ and the manner in which these individuals ‘challenge’ assumptions, customs and habits.

In spite of the assertions made above in reference to the officially specified role of the College, for others its *raison d’être* was more contrived and for Thrupp (2005):

“...the NCSL is more generally being used as a conduit or relay of New Labour policy into schools while critical perspectives which do not fit with government policy are largely ignored.” (Thrupp 2005:18)

In support of Thrupp’s position, it can be noted that the discourse of post-welfarist education policy and of New Labour is reflected further in another government statement referring to the College’s role, a statement that reflects the discourse of new managerialism:

“The NCSL and headteacher training providers should consider how best to monitor and evaluate the impact of leadership training on raising standards and school improvement, with a view to ensuring both quality and value for money.” (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate 2002:19)

The references to ‘raising standards’ allude to the pre-election rhetoric of the then Labour Party leader Tony Blair and the focus on ‘school improvement’ and ‘value for money’ are also wholly indicative of an ideological position which, in short, apports the responsibility for ‘school improvement’ to the headteacher rather than addressing, at a governmental level, extenuating external factors most namely socioeconomic deprivation.

The comments that Thrupp made in reference to the College in 2005 gave a clear prediction of its future direction, as Bush (2013) explains:

“From 2012, the College was transformed into an Executive Agency of the Department of Education. The initial claim that the NCSL would be an ‘independent voice of school leaders’ was always too ambitious, and constrained by the secretary of state’s ‘remit letter’, setting out government expectations for the year ahead. However, the change to agency status, to enable the College to be ‘directly accountable to ministers’, removed the last vestiges of ‘independence’.” (Bush 2013:459)

This is indeed noteworthy criticism as Bush (2008) had previously stated “[the NCSL] is probably the most significant global initiative for leadership development.” (Bush 2008:73). In stark contrast, he concludes his latest contribution to the college by stating:

“The NCSL is now required to implement government policy. More than ever, leadership development is a vehicle for ensuring compliance with national imperatives.” (Bush 2013:459)

It is without doubt that the National College has conducted some positive work in assisting headteachers and other school managers since its inception in 2000. Increasingly, the College has played a key role in connecting school managers and

by offering assistance and online courses in a virtual environment. However, the intractable links with government policy are evidence that the College's impact seems limited to that dictated by the incumbent government.

2.2.5.2 The National Standards for Headteachers

The National Standards for Headteachers came into being in 1998 and were originally produced by the Teacher Training Agency with further revisions in 2000, 2004 and 2014. The Standards were used to assist in the recruitment of headteachers and to outline a set of expectation for the role of headship in England. The Standards were also intended to be used for performance management as well as being the foundation of the NPQH, as will be explained in Section 2.2.5.3. They have been described as follows:

“The National Standards for Headteachers programme is the main vehicle for headship assessment, training and development... [They] define the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes required for the key tasks of headship.” (Nathan 2000:21)

The introduction to the Standards advises the reader that:

“[The standards] will assist in the recruitment of headteachers and in performance management processes. They provide guidance to all school stakeholders in what should be expected from the role of the headteacher and are also used to identify threshold levels of performance for the assessment framework within the National Professional Qualification for Headship.” (Department for Education and Skills 2004:5)

The original Standards were as follows:

1. Strategic Direction and Development of the School
2. Teaching and Learning
3. Leading and Managing Staff
4. Efficient and Effective Deployment of Staff and Resources

5. Accountability

The Standards were revised in 2004:

1. Shaping the Future
2. Leading Learning and Teaching
3. Developing Self and Working with Other
4. Managing the Organisation
5. Securing Accountability
6. Strengthening Community (Department for Education and Skills 2004:4)

The Standards were again reviewed in 2015 and retitled ‘The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers’ (Department of Education 2015^a), displaying again the importance with which successive governments with supposedly differing ideological perspectives still saw the importance of ensuring these prescriptive Standards existed.

I will examine some of the documentation pertaining to the Standards below in reference to Gewirtz’s (2002) characteristics of ‘new managerialism’. It should be noted that while these Standards do not appear to be ‘managerialist’ in these key titles, the very idea of having national standards for headteachers is at its core a managerialist construct. The belief that role of the headteacher in different schools in terms of their phase, size and the socioeconomic background of their cohorts can be prescribed by a set of standards is managerialism exemplified as detailed above (Handy 1984, Clarke & Newman 1997)

As I will discuss below, in terms of the shift from welfarism to new managerialism, the Standards made an explicit statement regarding how schools should be led. The Standards were also important as they were intrinsically linked to the foundation and of the NPQH and the assessment of its trainees as will be discussed in section 2.2.5.3 below.

The purpose of the Standards as being formed in order to not simply to aid headteachers' development but to ensure a framework within which they were to conduct their role is noted by Orchard (2002):

“It is important to reiterate that the primary purpose of the National Standards is professional development for headteachers, not accountability, although it would be naive to suggest that the two are in no way linked.” (Orchard 2002:165).

These assertions concur with a belief that the NPQH and National Standards for Headteachers serve each other in legitimating the forced professionalization and public accountability of headteachers. As Gunter & Forrester (2010^a) explain:

“Official judgements about headteachers are irrevocably linked with the criteria of the Standards. These should be fair, accurate and realistic. It would be unfortunate to countenance a situation in which headteachers with finely tuned bureaucratic skills were more highly valued than headteachers with the ability to manage people.” (Gunter & Forrester 2010^a:168)

Indeed, the Standards do substantiate Gewirtz's (2002:32) assertion of the discourse shift towards new managerialism from welfarism and is apparent in the language of the Standards. This is exemplified in the following ways,

(1) That which Gewirtz deems to be 'customer service ethos' is reflected in the latest 'National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers' (2015) that dictate that which the headteacher should:

“Work with political and financial astuteness, within a clear set of principles centred on the school's vision, ably translating local and national policy into the school's context.” (Department of Education 2015^a:7)

(2) In terms of Gewirtz's reference to 'Total Quality Management' the 2004 Standards clearly state that the headteacher should:

“Implement successful performance management processes with all staff.” (Department for Education and Skills 2004:9).

(3) In reference the ‘authoritarian/macho’ approach that Gewirtz cites as being a key characteristic of new managerialism, it is clear that the Standards concur with this ideological perspective of leadership stating that the headteacher:

“Challenge underperformance at all levels” (Department for Education and Skills 2004:7) and “takes appropriate action when performance is unsatisfactory” (Department for Education and Skills 2004:8). The latest standards go a step further introducing the contemporary leadership discourse with the idea of ‘charismatic leadership’ by stating the headteacher should “Model entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to school improvement.” (Department of Education 2015^a:7)

However, perhaps an equally important distinction is to examine not only what the Standards include but what they do not include. Therefore in reference to Gewirtz’s distinction between welfarism and new managerialism it can be clearly illustrated that the Standards in any of their incarnations do not include reference to elements such as the “emphasis on collective relations with employees” or a “public service ethos” or an overt sense of “Managers [being] socialized within field and values of specific welfare sector.” (Gewirtz 2002:32).

The Standards most certainly defined what headship is and the managerialist discourse of headship is maintained in a document that is concomitantly used in the national training programme for headteachers to which I shall now direct my discussion.

2.2.5.3 National Professional Qualification for Headship

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) was introduced in 1997 as a response to an apparent need for a standardised training programme for prospective headteachers. However, the idea for the qualification can be traced back further, Brundrett (1999) notes that:

“The qualification was first given imprimatur in 1995 when a Conservative Secretary of State for Education and Employment, Gillian Shepherd, announced her intention to empower the quasi-independent Governmental organisation, the Teacher Training

Agency, to create a training programme for aspirant headteachers.” (Brundrett 1999:497)

The commencement of the NPQH in 1997 occurred at around the same time as the publication of the first National Standards for Headteachers. The NPQH was given mandatory status and from April 2004, those applying for headship positions had to be enrolled on the NPQH. From April 2009 those applying for headship positions had to already hold the NPQH.

In reference to the version of the NPQH that was most relevant to the headteachers whom I interviewed, it can be seen below the NPQH was linked to the National Standards for Headteachers at every stage:

“-The **Entry Stage** in which the applicant had to specifically cite two examples of their practice in reference to each of the National Standards for Headteachers.

-The **Entry Assessment and 2-day Development Event** in which the applicant was assessed by way of an examination, role playing, group work and final interview at which they were given development targets in reference to the National Standards for Headteachers and deemed to be ready to become a ‘trainee headteacher’.

- The **Development Stage** during which the trainee undertook a short placement in another school, received coaching, conducted online courses and had to complete a portfolio detailing their development in reference to the National Standards for Headteachers.

-After typically 6-12 months the trainee had the **Graduation Stage** where they presented their learning to a graduation board made up of two to three headteachers who judged the development of the trainee and their readiness for headship in direct correlation with the National Standards for Headteachers.” (Adapted from the National College for School Leadership: Guidance for Applicants 2011:5)

In reference to the distinction made by Gewirtz pertaining to the shift from welfarism to new managerialism following the 1988 ERA, it is clear that the NPQH is reflective of this shift in discourse and subsequently in guiding defining the headship role in England. Attempts to formalise the role of headteachers and to

categorise their work into standards are a shift from what had previously been deemed 'welfarism' to a business focused model or a position based on managerialist ideals.

Regarding the shift from welfarism to leadership models that replicate those utilised in businesses and other organisations, Thrupp & Willmott (2003) note the deficiencies of the post-welfarist approach in relation to the content of the NPQH 'In the NPQH, for example, other key elements such as the culture and values of the school are missing.' (2003:173) and Tomlinson (2003) argues that "...headteachers [are] trained in managerial techniques of leadership." (Tomlinson 2003:196)

Gunter & Forrester (2010^a) also perceive the implementation of such as programme as the further manifestation of the headteacher as a purveyor of policy:

"New Labour codified the leadership of schools through additional centralisation of the curriculum, standards and testing and through extending the training and accreditation of headteachers as local reform deliverers." (Gunter & Forrester 2010^a:61)

The NPQH has not only been criticised in terms of its perceived 'managerialist' slant. The content of the programme and the provision itself have also been criticised, especially so during the first few years of its inception. Ribbins (1999) argued that the NPQH was '...highly prescriptive and focused narrowly on the delivery of a package of material developed centrally and initially at least produced in haste.' Whereas Bush (1999) deemed the NPQH '...narrow and summative...' (Bush 1999:321).

The NPQH has now undergone further change, first alluded to in the 'Schools White Paper 2010: The Importance of Teaching' which stated the concerns raised about the hidden purpose of the NPQH:

"We are concerned that the qualification has been overly focused on how to implement government policy rather than on the key skills required for headship." (The Department for Education 2010:27)

The White Paper (2010) states that this concern would be addressed in the following manner:

“We will expect it to focus on the occupational requirements of being a head, and we will ask the National College to learn from MBA and Masters in Public Administration courses.” (ibid)

This was confirmed when the new format of the NPQH was announced in 2012 as Bush notes, “Ministers wish to see closer links between NPQH and masters’ degrees, and licensees with higher education institution involvement will have the opportunity to develop such links.” (Bush 2013:458)

The Coalition government’s desire to align the NPQH with MBA & MPA programmes was entirely consistent with a belief in the effectiveness of managerialist approaches in educational management. After all, MBAs programmes have been marketed based on the concept of generic management as stated above.

A further fundamental change was made in April 2012, when aspiring headteachers were no longer required to hold NPQH in order to take up a headship post. The decision to abolish mandatory status was made by ministers and is in line with government intentions to give schools, and those who lead them, ‘the freedom to make their own decisions’ (The Department for Education 2012). However, Bush (2013) notes:

“The College website adds that ‘the government does, however, recognize the value and importance of the NPQH, and endorse it as the qualification of choice for anyone aspiring to headship’ and the programme will continue to be subsidized. Given this positive rhetoric, it is surprising that mandatory status has been dropped. (Bush 2013:458)

In order to further decentralise the provision of schooling the Coalition government sought to actively establish academies, further building on New Labour’s ‘City Academy model’, and free schools in a predictable attempt to develop the actualisation of the marketization of education. Indeed, the very provision for the

NPQH is now based on a market model as it is run via external providers in line with the guidelines set out by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

In conclusion, I have outlined above the concerted efforts by successive governments in England to standardise the role of headship by way of national standards, a national qualification and a national college. I will briefly summarise this discussion in terms of the manner in which these elements may reflect the characteristics of new managerialism and how they represent a shift away from a welfarist perspective of headship in England.

From its inception until its current status as a governmental executive agency the **National College for School Leadership** has been cited as being a purveyor of government policy (Thrupp 2005, Bush 2013), indeed its status change from QUANGO to Executive Agency was certainly indicative of the importance with which the Coalition and Conservative governments viewed the College in spite of it being founded by New Labour. The limited attempts of the College to engage with educational research in spite of David Blunkett's claim that it was to be 'a single national focus for school leadership development and research' bring further evidence that its ability to purvey the latest policy has become far more influential than any educational research focus.

The **National Standards for Headteachers** were analysed in accordance with the elements that reflect that which Gewirtz (2002) deems 'new managerialism' and of equal importance was the lack of a 'welfarist' discourse within the Standards. Again, the very establishment of a set of standards and of a belief in generic standards is in itself the epitome of managerialism. The Standards also reflect and rely upon the belief of school improvement, which for Thrupp (1999):

"By suggesting that schools are capable of being largely self-managing, self-evaluating and self-improving, E&I research may have underpinned decentralising reforms which have removed important forms of administrative support and funding in the name of more autonomy for schools." (Thrupp 1999:7) and continues: "E&I researchers are likely to have under-estimated the intense intake-related pressures which accrue to teachers and school leaders in working class settings." (ibid)

The Standards were also shown to have managerialist elements as they do not consider any specific contexts of the headteachers but expect conformity above all and in spite of all situations.

As stated above, the **National Professional Qualification for Headship** has been criticised for its intractable links to government and its codifying focus (Gunter & Forrester 2010^a, Thrupp & Willmott 2003, Tomlinson 2003) and narrow content (Ribbins 1999, Bush 1999). Also noteworthy is the manner in which the training was conducted in order to ensure at every single stage of the qualification the trainee headteacher was conforming to the National Standards for Headteachers. Since 2010 the NPQH has reflected a managerialist ideology insofar as the government has made a policy statement that the NPQH should be conducted in the manner of an MBA, which can be seen as a managerialist perception of the headship role.

The National College for School Leadership, the National Standards for Headteachers and the National Professional Qualification for Headship are clear examples of Ball's (2003) 'performativity', which he defines as follows:

"Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection." (Ball 2003:216)

2.3 Conclusion

To conclude, the literature review has illustrated that the headship role in England has undergone change and that such change has been as a result of government policies and practices often as clear manifestations of party political doctrine. It is also clear that the managerialization of education is noticeable within the education system and that it too is resultant from a definitive set of ideologies as explained in detail above.

The formation of a national college, a national set of standards and a national qualification for headship may ultimately be perceived as the result of a managerialist perspective and an indication of what Ball (2003) refers to as 'performativity'. The school improvement and effectiveness movements, along with the cult of the superhead have also been illustrated as manners in which managerialist ideologies are seen to be manifested and perpetuated.

Having conducted this review, it is still clear that my main research question and sub-questions are validated by the literature review and remain pertinent. Namely:

- (1) It is apparent that managerialism has had an impact on education policy in England, but my research seeks to find out to what extent this has affected headship in England, most especially as similar studies have not been completed and there is a dearth of up-to-date research pertaining to this.
- (2) In terms of the government policies, there is research on how these have affected teachers and evidence of whole scale changes in the form of the policies as discussed extensively above, but I will seek to provide a viewpoint as to how this not just affects the headteacher's daily practice but the ways in which it does so.
- (3) I have outlined a well-documented analysis of generic leadership and qualifications that can be tangibly recorded and outlined but my analysis will once again bring a different perspective in terms of the extent to which these elements do or do not impact upon headship.
- (4) Whereas there is a certain amount of research that I have reviewed pertaining to the impact of managerialism and its manifestations on teachers, the impact on students and parents have not been as widely investigated and I believe the unique position of the headteacher as head of the school dealing directly with these members of the school community offers a great deal to this area.

With this consideration firmly in mind I will now detail my research methodology and how it assisted me in achieving the aims outlined above.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline my research approach, thereby ensuring that I have made just consideration of the pertinent philosophical aspects of my chosen method. I will begin by restating my research question and sub-questions, as outlined in the introduction. This is a vital element of this chapter as all research choices are intrinsically bound and philosophically intertwined with the purpose of the given piece of research.

Having completed this task, I will then clarify the reasoning behind my choice of the semi-structured interview technique. My discussion will then look at how the sampling took into consideration the aims of the research and the nature of the phenomena that I was researching, as well as the pragmatic element of how the respondents were selected.

The final sections of this chapter will specifically examine the manner in which the data were analysed and the reasons for the utilization of such methods. I will then conclude by outlining the ethical dilemmas posed by the research and how I was able to proactively address such concerns.

3.2 Research Aim & Questions

In Chapter 1, I stated the research question as well as the three sub-questions. These were subsequently considered in the literature review and in the interests of clarity I will outline them briefly here. The title of the research indicates the broad area for research:

A Research Enquiry to Ascertain the Extent to Which Managerialism has Permeated the Headship Role in England.

The research also has three sub-questions, intrinsically linked to the main question, which I intend to address:

(1) In what manner have government policies and subsequent legislation impacted upon headship in England?

(2) What has been the impact of managerialist conceptions of generic management and leadership on headteachers in England as manifested in national standards, training institutions and qualifications?

(3) In what manner and to what extent have any such changes to headship affected teachers, students and parents?

Every aspect of this research enquiry has been bound by this overriding question and sub-questions. The critical analysis as presented in the literature review were also fundamentally constructed in accordance with the question and sub-question. Likewise, the methodological foundation and the choice of research methods are also bound by the main research question and sub-questions.

The area that I am studying has huge personal and professional significance for me and at every stage of this research inquiry from the inception of the idea, to the research proposal and to the conducting of research, I have carefully considered the manner of research that would best enable to me to address the research question and sub-questions.

3.3 Methodological Foundation

Having restated the research question and sub-questions and before discussing the elements related to the research itself and ethical considerations, it is important to discuss the methodological foundations upon which the research methods are based and the guiding research philosophy that ultimately drove my decision to proceed with what may be defined as a qualitative approach.

I will structure this section in terms of the methodological, epistemological and ontological bases of the research paradigm and whereas limitations of space will necessitate a brief review of my methodology, I do however believe it will be sufficient in justifying my position before moving on to the realisation of this vision in the form of my research approach.

In terms of ontology Sikes (2005) states:

“Concerned with the nature or essence of things so ontological assumptions about social reality will focus on whether a person sees reality as external, independent, given and objectively real, or, instead, as socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thought expressed through language.” (Sikes 2005:20)

In deciding upon an **ontological** foundation or position upon which to posit and guide my methodology and subsequently my choice of a pertinent research method, I firmly concur with Sikes’s latter definition and my ontological position is formed within a subjectivist paradigm from a subjectivist perspective. Therefore, social reality as being created by the individual and individual actions can be explained from a nominalist perspective. I believe that this offers a suitable connection with the research question and sub-questions as it enables an in-depth interpretation by the headteachers of their experience of managerialism and ultimately to ascertain the extent of its permeation of the headship role.

This is a perspective that sees a necessity in understanding the social reality that individuals themselves experience, a view that requires the researcher to look for opportunities for the individual to explain the world from their viewpoint. This position is, of course, in opposition to the positivist researcher who is of the belief that social reality is an independent construct. Whereas there may be an independent reality in terms of the manifestations of managerialism in terms of such artefacts as policy documents, my focus is upon how such elements are viewed by the respondents thereby rendering a subjectivist perspective.

In short, I ascertained that only a qualitative methodology involving a focus on the individual is able to truly garner data rich enough to enable an adequate analysis and to address my research question and sub-questions.

Epistemology may simply be stated as being the theory of knowledge and the often simplistic, though functionally necessary boundaries that separate subjective and objectivist assumptions about the social world often deem the epistemological perspective as either positivist or anti-positivist (Cohen & Manion 2007:7).

As can be discerned from the position outlined above and whereas I prefer not to specifically adhere to set boundaries of philosophical and ideological categorization, the epistemological foundation from which I wish to found my theoretical basis would certainly be in the realms of anti-positivism. Consequently my research approach is determined by this interpretivist perspective:

“Research which proceeds from the epistemological assumption that knowledge in experiential and subjective will usually place considerable emphasis on the accounts given by informants.” (Sikes 2005:22)

In general, the perspective laid out above would denote the use of qualitative methods although I did take heed from Pring’s (2000) warning that:

“There is a danger in educational research of drawing too sharp a contrast between different kinds of division and different kinds of enquiry.” (Pring 2000:43)

The preceding discussion was made in order to provide the reader with a clear insight into the reasons behind my methodological choices, as manifested in my research approach. I will now briefly look at how a qualitative framework for research has consequences in terms of validity, reliability, generalisability and triangulation.

Validity is a multi-faceted term that has different meanings and varying importance depending on one’s paradigm. It is important to provide a response to validity, as Bulmer (1984) argues:

“The *validity* of knowledge produced by different means – the extent to which empirical research yields knowledge about the construct which it purports to depict – is less easily determined yet repays attention.” (Bulmer 1984:30)

Cohen & Manion (2007) supports the importance of ensuring validity:

“It is very easy to slip into invalidity; it is both insidious and pernicious as it can enter every stage of research.” (Cohen & Manion 2007:115)

Whereas there is a danger that the qualitative researcher may become preoccupied with ensuring validity, it is still important to ensure that research accords with

correct academic procedures and has requisite academic rigour. Indeed for Guba & Lincoln (1989) it is not possible to categorically state that research is 'right'. They prefer the term 'credibility' and associated a set of criteria for ensuring such credibility.

"The credibility criterion is parallel to internal validity in that the idea of isomorphism between findings and an objective reality is replaced by isomorphism between constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them... There are several techniques for increasing the probability that such isomorphism will be verified and for actually verifying it." (Guba & Lincoln 1989:237)

I am in agreement with this sentiment and I was able to employ what Guba & Lincoln refer to as 'techniques' (ibid) in the following ways:

As a practising headteacher myself I strongly believe I am able to utilise Guba & Lincoln's technique of **Prolonged Engagement** as in my everyday work life I am able to adhere to the following recommendation: "...to establish the rapport and build the trust necessary to uncover constructions, and to facilitate immersing oneself [myself] in the context's culture." (ibid). This also enables me to effectively achieve **Persistent Observation**, which "enables the evaluator to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and to focus on them in detail." (ibid)

I also believe that I was able to use **Progressive Subjectivity**, "The process of monitoring the evaluator's own developing construction." (ibid: 238) Having worked on this research enquiry for a period of time and having constantly revaluated my ideas by way of the literature review and also by extensive and on-going dialogues with my supervisors as well as with my fellow doctoral students.

In terms of what may be considered a return to the discussion of 'traditional' methods of validation, I will conclude by examining **reliability**, which Cohen (ibid: 117) denotes as:

"A reliable instrument for a piece of research will yield similar data from similar respondents over time." (Cohen 2007:117)

As a qualitative researcher my aim is to ensure consistency between my respondents in order to maintain the rigour of my research method rather than to adhere to a concept for the sake of a certain academic perspective and as Cohen concludes “perhaps the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimise the amount of bias as much as possible.” (ibid:121).

Again, this measure was taken at the implementation of the research approach from the design of the questions to the conducting of the interviews themselves and is further detailed in below in Section 3.4.1.

Triangulation is often seen a method that will allow for greater validity and reliability. For Denzin (1970) there are four types of triangulation:

1. Theoretical Triangulation
2. Data Triangulation
3. Investigator Triangulation
4. Methodological Triangulation (Denzin 1970:472)

In reference to triangulation, Silverman (2013) argues that:

“Broadly, using a constructionist model is simply not compatible with the assumption that ‘true’ fixes on ‘reality’ separately from particular ways of looking at it. Of course, this does not mean that you should not use different data sets or deploy different methods. The problem only arises when you use such multiplicity as a way of settling question.” (Silverman 2013:288)

In concurrence with this sentiment I did not want to adhere to triangulation ‘for the sake of it’ as I had confidence in the methodological foundation of my research approach and, for example, it would have been impractical to have had another researcher involved in my collation of data. However, I was able to adhere to ‘data triangulation’ by way of my sampling choices. As Denzin (1970) states, “Observations on time, social situations, and persons in various forms of interaction can all be gathered.” (Denzin 1970:472)

Finally, I would like to briefly discuss **generalisability**, again a term that does not necessarily sit well within the methodological paradigm that I have outlined. I concur with Pitman & Maxwell's (1994) assertion that:

“In qualitative research, it is primarily the readers who determine whether the study or evaluation generalizes to their situations.” (Pitman & Maxwell in LeCompte et al. 1994:748)

It is far from my intention to disregard generalisability as such, but as with my discussion of triangulation and to a lesser extent validity and reliability, the strength of my research inquiry is to be judged on the accomplishment of its goals, the thoroughness of the literature review and the pragmatic realisation of the research methods with full attention paid to bias especially in terms of the data garnered, as well as the firm adherence and consideration of the ethical issues that one must take into account.

This section has discussed some complex and contentious concepts and although limitations of space have not made it possible to be able to engage in a more thorough debate, I have sought to achieve my aim of providing a theoretical grounding for my research and a justification for the methodology.

3.4 Research Approach

Having examined the methodological and philosophical elements pertaining to this research enquiry, I will now examine the pragmatic realization of these considerations as well as the manner in which the research question and sub-questions were addressed ‘on the ground’. The choice of research approach is ultimately driven by the aim of the research as well as the methodological considerations outlined above.

Bearing this in mind, I spent a period of one year researching and reading about various methods that may suit my purpose. In hindsight, this may seem a rather excessive use of my time. However, in spite of the delay in beginning the research that this period of reflection and contemplation caused, such a lengthy time of

structured consolidation enabled me to make, what I believe and hope to be, the correct choice of method. As Hammersley (2008) warns:

“It seems to me that qualitative researchers need to become more reflective and open-minded, to recognise the contradictory methodological arguments that now inform their work, and to engage with the serious problems that remain unresolved.” (Hammersley 2008:38)

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Scott & Morrison (2007) state that the structured interview is:

“The most common of all methods used in education research.” (Scott & Morrison 2007:133)

When I deliberated the semi-structured interview method in a measured and rational manner, I realized that it would be suitable in allowing me the time to interview the number of individuals whom I had decided would form a suitable number of respondents.

The very definition of a semi-structured interview may itself be contentious. I choose the term (the method has also been referred to as ‘guided interview’) because although I had an interview schedule with a definitive set of questions, the questions were, as I shall explain below, structured in a manner that allowed for the respondents to have the freedom to express their views and to proffer a representation of their reality in an unrestricted and boundless manner. Bryman (2012) states that in the semi-structured interview:

“...by and large, all the questions will be asked [from the research schedule] and a similar wording will be used from interviewee to interviewee.” (Bryman 2012:471)

For Denscombe (2007) the method allows the interviewee to ‘...develop ideas and speak more widely on issues raised by the researcher.’ (Denscombe 2007:113)

A major strength of the approach was that it allowed me to design a tightly structured interview schedule in close alignment to the research question and sub-

questions while still giving scope for further elucidation by the interviewees. As Gilbert (1993) notes:

“Interview schedules must provide filter questions to ensure that the interviewer can move smoothly from section to section.” (Gilbert 1993:110)

Silverman (1995) confirms that the approach is favoured in educational contexts as it:

“...allows respondents to express themselves at some length but offers enough shape to prevent aimless rambling” (Silverman 1995:272)

There were, of course, a number of issues that I needed to address in order for the approach to best enable me to realize its purpose of addressing my research questions and sub-questions. A number of writers have stated the disadvantages of interviews as well as the problems associated with the approach at both the theoretical level and in their pragmatic implementation. I will now briefly examine a selection of these stated disadvantages and criticisms of the chosen research method and, most importantly, state how I sought to ensure structures were put in place to pre-empt such issues that I have divided into five key areas:

(i) Cost

For Newby (2010), one of the disadvantages of semi-structured interviews is that they are:

“Time-consuming, high cost” (Newby 2010:342)

As a full-time headteacher and part-time researcher, the cost to my time was of greater significance than the financial cost. However, such was my belief (based on the factors outlined above) in the importance of gaining the correct data in relation to my research question and sub-questions and in order to provide a representative sample, I did not at any stage decide upon a certain number of respondents in order to lessen the time I would spend transcribing and analyzing the data. I decided upon the number of participants (see Section 3.6) due to my belief that this was a number and a variety that would yield meaningful and usable data.

While Newby's assertion is correct and whereas it would certainly have been easier and less time-consuming for me to send out a batch of questionnaires that could then have been easily codified, my firm belief in my research approach, which, as stated above, came after a long period of careful consideration, was not swayed by a consideration of time and cost. Of fundamental importance is the correct research tool for the particular task, or as Silverman (2006) categorically states, "Everything depends on your purposes at hand." (Silverman 2006:125).

(ii) Bias

Cohen (2007) warns of the potential for bias to adversely influence the interview process. Certainly, bias is the most often cited as being the 'enemy' of the research interview, indeed a danger to qualitative research in general. Therefore, it is important that I expand upon the methodical manner in which I combatted the issue of bias. As stated above, I do not fundamentally believe that the qualitative researcher and the subsequent role as interviewer are neutral entities seeking to gain a 'pure' disassociated vision of the world. However, an understanding of the dangers of bias and the aforementioned belief are not mutually exclusive.

The most important thing was to ensure that the research questions and sub-questions, and the literature review were intertwined and inseparable from each other. This allowed the reader to clearly see from where the questions were derived and why the questions were structured in the given manner.

Whereas the data garnered could not be, indeed should not, have been predictable to the respondent, a clear and perceptible outline had to be followed. As will be seen in my discussion regarding the research schedule below, this was comprehensively completed. Aside from the rigorous design of the interview schedule, there were also actions and precautions that I proactively sought to comply with as the interviewer, which I will now expand upon further.

(iii) Interviewer

I was fully aware of the impact that my words, my actions, my appearance and my behaviour were to have on the respondents. Indeed, my contact with them from the initial request was considered in a manner that would allow the respondents to feel at

ease (see Section 3.6 below). I was indeed fortunate that certain elements that may affect others researchers' ability to interview without the interviewer's impact being too prominent were somewhat negated due to the makeup of the sample.

The respondents were all headteachers or former headteachers in England. As a headteacher myself, there was not a tension that may have been experienced had I been interviewing teachers, who may have felt that their words may be fed back to their own headteachers. Also, as a headteacher in an international context I was genuinely naïve as to the context and certain elements of the headteachers' responses, while not being totally unaware of that which they were speaking. Interacting with the respondents as a peer allowed for meaningful interaction and certainly a more natural experience for the respondents.

I also ensured that there was an interaction on my part, which, while not leading the respondents in any way or unnecessarily deviating from the topics to be covered, allowed the interview to become more convivial and suitably relaxed. A lack of response from the interviewer can have a very negative impact on the interview process and subsequently the quality of the data. Silverman (2006) notes:

“The very passivity of the interviewer can create an extremely powerful constraint on the interviewee to talk.” (Silverman 2006:125)

Being ‘unbiased’ does not mean that the researcher remain stone-faced or blindly adherent to the structure of the schedule in spite of all else but rather that the researcher has pre-empted such issues and is able to illustrate this in their research design. A failure to do so before the interview itself will leave the researcher in an irreversibly difficult position and open to criticisms of bias.

(iv) Interviewee

Cohen (2007) notes that the interviewee can also unwittingly have an adverse impact upon the process:

“Respondents may be unduly helpful by attempting to anticipate what the interviewer wants to hear.” (Cohen 2007:283)

However, this problem should be perceived as the fault of the interviewer rather than the interviewee. The role of the interviewee and the quality of data garnered is dependent on the skills of the researcher; therefore, the problem outlined above was again averted by my questions and my decision on how to conduct the interview.

There is an adage stating ‘there are no bad interviewees only bad interviewers’ and this is a sentiment that I adhered to in trying to provide every opportunity for the respondents to be in a position to provide a meaningful representation of their reality in reference to the research context. I attempted to achieve this by ensuring that I was proactive in my considered communication with the respondents both before and during the interview and in the analytical manner in which I constructed the interview schedule, as I will further expand upon in the next section.

3.5 Interview Schedule

In this section, I will explain how I developed the interview schedule. The interview schedule is of significance in ensuring that the semi-structured research method is able to yield the appropriate data. In designing the research schedule, I had two very clear goals. The first was to ensure that the questions were constructed in a manner enabling me to gain meaningful data to allow me to address the research question and sub-questions. As Cohen (2007) advises:

“Before the actual interview items are prepared, it is desirable to give some thought to the questions format and response mode.” (Cohen 2007:274)

My second aim was to ensure that the structure of the schedule allowed the respondents to feel relaxed by way of ‘scaling’ questions and also ensuring that each question followed on from the other in a definite sequence of conceptual areas and themes deemed by Cohen (ibid) to be ‘sequence and framing’ (ibid: 280). However, paradoxically, such a progression of ideas was not explicit to the respondents so that they were able to answer the questions in a natural manner rather than answering in accordance with what they thought they ‘should’ be saying in reference to a certain topic. I am not stating that the design was deliberately opaque or misleading but rather that the questions allowed for a natural interaction.

The questions were structured in various ways so that the interview was natural rather than a series of ‘machine gun’ questions and responses. There were a total of 31 questions asked although in some cases the responses pre-empted a question, thereby rendering any such questions superfluous and unused (a copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix 1).

I had conducted a pilot interview prior to my beginning the final construction of the interview schedule and this was extremely useful in allowing me to ascertain question formations and the order of questions that were counter-productive to the goal of ensuring a fluid interviewing process. During the pilot interview, I was also able to highlight questions that may have been unclear or ambiguous. If I had not completed this pilot, it would have led to some complications during the final interviews.

3.6 Sample

I have discussed the methodological foundation, the research approach and the interview schedule. Of equal importance is the manner in which I considered and ultimately chose the sample. As Marshall & Rossman (2006) state:

“Well-developed sampling decisions are crucial for any study’s soundness.”
(Marshall & Rossman 2006:64)

It is without doubt that the ‘ideal’ sample that one may imagine at the outset of piece of research never materializes and nor should it. Indeed, the interview process itself led me to make a decision to change an element of the sample. Silverman (2003) recognises this as being a positive aspect of qualitative research:

“One of the great strengths of qualitative research design is that it often allows for far greater (theoretically informed) flexibility than in most quantitative research designs.” (Silverman 2003:108)

We are also bound by the realities of being able or not being able to gain access to respondents. When the research necessitates speaking to headteachers the problem becomes more enhanced. I am a headteacher and I understand that headteachers’ time is extremely valuable. As Adler & Adler (2012) state:

“A small number of cases, or subjects, may be extremely valuable and represent adequate numbers for a research project. This is especially true for studying hidden or hard to access populations such as deviants or elites.” (Adler & Adler in Baker & Edwards 2012:8)

It is clear that headteachers can be considered among the ‘elite’ category, who are indeed ‘hard to access’. I was therefore fortunate, by way of having a definite plan, to be able to gain access to the headteachers and to have spent a quality amount of time with each of them.

My sampling plan was in two stages. The first stage was to ensure that the decision pertaining to the sample was made in reference to my research questions and sub-questions, the methodological considerations I had made and the research method chosen (as a result of the first two elements). After having decided upon the sample that would best suit my research aims, I was then faced with the rather more practical step of deciding how I was going to find such individuals. I will now briefly elaborate on each of these stages.

Stage 1: Deciding upon the sample

The first choice was the number of respondents and as this was a small-scale study and as my time and ability to access the sample population were both limited, I decided upon a figure of six respondents. This number enabled me to gain sufficient data to answer my research question and sub-questions while maintaining data triangulation by having respondents who spanned three different timespans as headteachers and in two very distinct educational contexts as detailed below. I also took heed in Saumure & Given’s (2008) advice pertaining to saturation:

“First, saturation may be achieved more quickly if the sample is cohesive. In this case, one is not trying to make the theory transferable to the general population...Second, theoretical sampling is key to achieving saturation quickly...Researchers are cautioned against using a random sample because it is possible to randomly select individuals who simply repeat what everyone else has said or who simply have no relationship to the emerging theory.” (Saumure & Given 2008:196)

Secondly, as I was studying headship over a period of time and in regard to various governmental policies and initiatives, I would need to speak to heads at various stages of their career. Therefore, I decided that I would speak to two new headteachers (less than two years' experience) two experienced headteachers (more than five years' experience) and two retired headteachers (who had been headteachers for at least five years during their careers and had extensive experience in education).

Thirdly, as I formulated my ideas, I realized that I needed to split the sample into state school heads and independent school heads in order to investigate the differences between these two sets of professionals in seemingly very different circumstances but with the same institutional goal, namely educating young people.

In terms of gender and school type, my sampling choices were restricted and whereas a study looking specifically focusing on gender differences within headteachers may have required different sampling, this was not a focus of my study. The phase of school was also not an area upon which I specifically concentrated my study as I was looking at the education system as a whole rather than seeking to compare one stage with another. As can be seen from my research question, sub- questions and literature review, I illustrated that the problems and the impact of policy are equally demonstrable whether or not the school is at the Primary or Secondary phase.

The sample that I managed to collate was almost exclusively Primary headteachers although some respondents had experience across different school phases. An offshoot of this was that a certain area fortuitously opened up to me. I do not believe I would have gained such a clear insight had I had a diverse sample in terms of school phase and having Primary headteachers was certainly a benefit in hindsight.

During the research process, I did make one change. Having spoken to the state-school experienced headteacher, James, I saw a huge difference between his experiences at two different schools, one in a socioeconomically deprived inner city area and one in an affluent village. This enabled me to realize that I could gain just as much from comparing the experiences of a headteacher at a school in a

socioeconomically deprived area with those of a headteacher from a state school in an affluent area. Based on this factor, I therefore decided to interview two inexperienced state school headteachers rather than one inexperienced state school headteacher and one inexperienced independent headteacher.

Stage 2: Finding the sample

In gaining access to a pertinent sample, I was able to use my membership of professional organisations as well as professional contacts. Attempting to speak to headteachers is generally more problematic than speaking to teachers due to, clearly, the lower number of headteachers and secondly their highly regimented schedules. Having attempted to contact headteachers in the past by way of ‘cold calling’, I understood that this method would not be time effective or appropriate in attempting to garner quality data in the requisite time.

I therefore relied partly on ‘snowball sampling’ and partly on contacts. I had two contacts one of whom was a retired state school headteacher and the other a retired independent school headteacher and they both agreed to be interviewed. They were also able to put me in contact with experienced state and independent school headteachers; there was not a conflict between the groups, as the contacts were only known to each other professionally.

The headteachers with less than two years’ experience were accessed by way of the National College for School Leadership with whom I had completed my NPQH. At that time the qualification was mandatory meaning that all new heads had to take the qualification, this enabled me to easily gain access to two such heads and, as stipulated above, I was in the fortunate position of being able to handpick these respondents from schools in very differing socioeconomic contexts.

Table 2 – Respondents’ Details

	Headship Experience	Education Experience	School Phase Experience	School Type Experience
Respondent 1: Catherine	6 years	34 years	Primary	State
Respondent 2: Elisabeth	25 years	50 years	Primary/Secondary	Independent
Respondent 3: James	6 years	16 years	Primary/Secondary	State
Respondent 4: Charlotte	6 years	20 years	Primary	Independent
Respondent 5: Juliet	1 year	12 years	Primary	State
Respondent 6: Margaret	1 year	36 years	Primary	State (voluntary aided)

3.7 Logistical Considerations & Practices

In this section, I will briefly describe the procedures that I followed in order to ensure the reader is aware that correct measures were taken in order to support the ethical dimensions of the research approach.

After receiving confirmation that they would take part, the participants were contacted by email three months in advance of the intended interview period in order to provide an official letter stating issues pertaining to the general purpose of the research and statements pertaining to issues of confidentiality and ethical considerations. The reason for such a lengthy period of notice was to allow the respondents to choose the time and place for the interviews thereby increasing the comfort that they felt and ensuring their schedules allowed for the interviews, again my own professional experience allowed me to consider the importance of such measures in accordance with the respondents’ own professional contexts.

The sessions were recorded by way of two digital recording devices with the express permission of the participants. I kept a copy of the interview schedule on a tablet device should I need to refer to it and I deliberately did not take notes or have a writing implement or paper in my possession. I felt this was important as the use of such note taking devices can perturb the interviewee and dissuade them from answering in anything other than an ‘interview’ manner.

The interviews took place in either the headteachers’ schools or in quiet areas of hotels within the given region, one of the interviews with a retired headteacher took place at their home at their request. After the interviews had taken place, I uploaded the files to two password-protected cloud computing storage areas and deleted the data from the digital devices thereby ensuring the recordings were appropriately secured. The manner in which the data was subsequently accessed and transcribed will be discussed in greater detail below.

3.8 Data Analysis

The purpose of this section is to outline the framework that I used in order to analyse the data thereby enlightening the reader as to the method that was used and the reasons behind the choice of such a method in the context of my research. I will also explain some of the practical decisions that I took when analysing the data, again in order for the reader to understand the manner in which the analysis took place. In terms of coding open-ended questions, De Vaus (2002) notes that:

“Open-ended questions that allow a set number of responses can produce a large number of possible answers which require particular strategies for coding and analysis.” (De Vaus 2002:10)

Taking this into account, I took a contemplative approach in deciding which data analysis would be most suitable for the research. As stated above, the method that I utilised had to suit the purposes of the research and would not have been chosen if it had not done so. I considered various approaches by way of engagement with pertinent literature, reading education theses and also considering methods that I had used in the past. I ultimately decided to use the Thematic Analysis approach which as Ritchie (2014) states:

“...involves discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data” (Ritchie 2014:283)

For Grbich (2007) Thematic Analysis is:

“A process of segmentation, categorization and relinking aspects of the data prior to the final interpretation” (Grbich 2007:16)

Having examined this method of analysis, it appeared to me that it would be pertinent in enabling the structure of my study to remain fluid and clear as this manner of analysis enabled

As Grbich (ibid) continues:

“Themes may come from previous relevant research which you have reviewed, from myths/evidence within the area being studied, or from guts feelings, as well as from the views of those being observed or interviewed.” (ibid: 32)

There have been criticisms of Thematic Analysis, as Bryman (2012) argues:

“Unlike strategies such as grounded theory or critical discourse analysis, this is not an approach that has a discernable heritage or that has been outlined in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques.” (Bryman 2012:578)

Indeed, proponents of the approach also highlight the flaws in its application. Examining the approach in terms of psychology research, Braun & Clark (2006) note:

“Thematic Analysis is poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely-used qualitative data analytic method within and beyond psychology.” (Braun & Clark 2006:3)

However, whereas the method may have been used in an imprudent manner by others this is not necessarily a slight against any given method but rather a reflection on those who use such devices in an uncritical and an ill-structured fashion. Indeed, Braun & Clark (ibid) have gone on to proffer support to the thematic analytic approach:

“Given the advantages of the flexibility of thematic analysis, it is important that we are not trying to limit this flexibility. However, an absence of clear and concise guidelines around thematic analysis means that the ‘anything goes’ critique of qualitative research may well apply in some instances.” (Braun & Clark 2006:3)

Having realised the aforementioned notion during my analysis of the technique, I sought a way in which the thematic analysis approach could provide a systematic method while allowing me the flexibility required to analyse my data in an unrestricted manner. By way of further reading and research, I ascertained that two elements that would guide me in my analysis.

The first was the framework device that was developed at the National Centre for Social Research, the method has now been incorporated into the Nvivo software suite (Spencer et al. 2014:283) Whereas, I did not use the Nvivo software or any other specific data analysis software in my data analysis, I did incorporate the central idea of the technique which Spencer et al (ibid) explain as:

“The matrix-based format, allows the analyst to move back and forth between two levels of abstraction without losing sight of the raw data...it can also be used with data that holds a more predetermined form, such as semi-structured interviews.” (Spencer et al. 2014:283)

Spencer’s (2014) latter assertion provided further justification for this approach fitting my chosen research method. Having ensured that the research method was based upon a definite methodological foundation, the analytical method needed to be considered in accordance with the same guidelines.

My second guide was a series of recommendations from Ryan & Bertrand (2003) who state that in order to identify key themes the researcher should be aware of the following elements:

- Repetitions
- Indigenous typologies or categories
- Metaphors and analogies
- Transitions

- Similarities and differences
- Linguistic connectors
- Missing data
- Theory-related material (Ryan & Bertrand 2003: 89-94)

Having decided upon my analytical tool, I conducted the data analysis as follows:

(1) After I had completed my interviews and physically secured the data as outlined above, I conducted an initial review of the data within a few days of each interview, primarily to ensure that the recordings were complete and audible. I then spent time listening to the interviews on a portable device, predominantly while commuting, without making any notes. I listened to each interview three times over a period of a month and I found this to be an extremely effective way of allowing myself to become familiar with the interviews and the emerging themes. This stage is defined as the familiarization process.

(2) The second part of familiarization was conducted in a more traditional manner by way of listening to each of the interview sequentially over a period of two days. During these sessions, I made considerable notes and began transcribing certain excerpts of the data that stood out, this necessitated listening to the recording several times in order to transcribe any such areas. Again, this was very useful in enabling me to begin gaining a very real sense of the data and the emergent themes.

(3) Upon completion of this process, I began to develop a thematic framework that included general themes that had emerged as well as sub-themes. I was, of course, aware of the themes that were inherent in my study, as manifested in the research question, sub-questions and the literature review, and these were areas that I explicitly considered, while also seeking new thematic areas. Having completed the thematic framework, I analysed the interviews again but this time, rather than listening to the entire recording, I ensured that I had garnered and noted down all of the relevant data in relation to each of the elements within the thematic framework that I had constructed.

As mentioned previously, I did not use any software specific to data analysis. My notes were made by hand and then the data were typed up into thematic categories in a separate document. This allowed me to have a workable document and also made the process of transferring excerpts from the interviews easier in terms of working on the same word processing platform as the research enquiry itself.

3.9 Ethics

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance when conducting any piece of research. In educational research, whether the participants in the study are children or whether they happen to be, as in my case, headteachers, I am ethically and morally bound to ensure that my research does not cause any emotional upset or damage to their professional reputation. It was also highly important that the participants were aware of the research's purpose and how the data drawn from the experiences that they share with me were to be used. As Silverman (2003) advises:

“When you are studying people's behaviour or asking them questions, not only the values of the researcher but the researcher's responsibility to those studied have to be faced.” (Silverman 2003:200)

As an educational researcher, my practices are always considered in reference to the comprehensive guidelines stipulate by the British Education Research Association (BERA).

However, as comprehensive as these guidelines are, I believe that I have a duty above and beyond these recommendations. Indeed, it is my responsibility to ensure that I am not a passive recipient of ethical considerations but that at every stage of the research I am proactive in ensuring the sanctity of the participants' personal and professional lives. I was always prepared to adapt my procedures when required in order to maintain my professional, moral and ethical obligations to the people who gave me their time and whose personal and professional well-being was of paramount importance. As Ritchie and Lewis (2014) state:

“Ethical qualitative research will not be achieved by following one ethical code or another.” (Ritchie & Lewis 2014:83)

Therefore, in order to be proactive in ensuring proper ethical behaviour, I considered the interviewing process in three stages and for each stage, I implemented procedures designed to guard against any ethical challenges.

3.9.1 Pre-Interview Stage

At this stage my key goal was to gain informed consent from each of the participants and to ensure that they had clear opportunities to choose whether or not they wished to take part in the research and that they were fully aware and fully briefed as to what the research entailed. I achieved this by way of an introductory email requesting their participation (this was after having spoken to the participants informally by either telephone or face-to-face). After this agreement was returned to me by email, I emailed the participants outlining the research area, the timing and the general areas that would be discussed. As Busher & James (2007) note:

“Researchers have a duty of care to ensure that they do not deliberately mislead participants as to the nature of the research or the researcher.” (Busher & James 2007:111)

On the day that the interviews took place I used two digital recorders after asking the participants’ consent. I also informed them of the following procedures:

- (1) The recordings would be stored securely in two cloud servers and would be deleted from the recorders.
- (2) Anything that they said during the interview was entirely confidential and the research enquiry would omit any elements that may reveal their identity.
- (3) That they could ask for anything they said during the interview to be struck from the record either during the interview or afterwards.
- (4) That anything said once I had informed them that the interview was over and the recorders were switched off would not be used in the research or considered by me in terms of my data collection.

3.9.2 Interview Stage

As stated in Section 3.7 above, no notes were taken during the interview and no areas other than those expressed to the respondents were covered. I also ensured that no superfluous questions such as the age of the respondents or their family background were asked as I felt these areas were private and, for example, the time span of the individual's career was important not the given respondent's age. As Busher & James (ibid) confirm:

“The ethical principle not to cause harm and to capture truthful views of events faces researchers with questions about what data need to be gathered.” (ibid:114)

3.9.3 Post-Interview Stage

At the end of the interview, the participants were informed that at any time they were welcome to request a copy of their recording. In terms of the data that I collected and the way in which the interactions with the interviewees took place while I was aware that all research interviews have an impact, I did not feel that any extra procedures were necessary in order to support the interviewees. Issues pertaining to anonymity and confidentiality will be discussed in the Research Findings chapter.

3.10 Anonymity and Confidentiality

As discussed in Section 3.6 above a total of six headteachers were interviewed. Two headteachers were retired, one from the state sector and one from the independent sector; two of the headteachers had more than five years of headship experience, again from the state and independent sectors and two headteachers with less than two years' experience, one from the state sector in an undersubscribed school in a socioeconomically deprived area and one from an oversubscribed grant-maintained school in an affluent area.

In order to protect the identity of the headteachers, I have provided them with pseudonyms. This decision was considered and thought out. Wiles (2013) offers an excellent review of two pertinent arguments:

“The use of pseudonyms is not without its problems in relation to successful anonymisation. Iphofen (2009: 94) notes that selecting pseudonyms that appear well-suited to the characteristics of a participant can pose confidentiality risks in that they may ‘offer subtle or latent clues’ to an individual's identity. Grinyer (2002), however, notes that using pseudonyms that are not ‘equivalent’ in some way to a participant's real name can seem inappropriate. Names can have specific social class, age and ethnic connotations and, arguably, their use can distort the meaning attributed to quotations.” (Wiles 2013:51)

I had intended to refer to the respondents by number e.g. *Headteacher 1* but during my initial drafting process this proved laborious and undoubtedly detracted from the smooth reading of the analysis. As noted above names are extremely important constructs and I therefore used historical census data in ensuring that the pseudonyms I gave, while in no way betraying the true identity of my respondents, are certainly names that these respondents could realistically have been given.

In order to give even further anonymity for both the sake of the respondents and the protection to the governors, parents, staff, children and local communities, I designated the locations in which the respondents have worked a being either the north of England or the south of England. I believe that any more specific geographical information would be superfluous and would certainly make it easier to identify the respondents.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the methodological, epistemological and ontological bases upon which the research is founded. I explained the research approach including how I recognised the areas of validity and reliability, as well as clearly explaining the development of the research schedule, the sampling process, the logistical arrangements and finally the ethical considerations. In the next chapter, I will look at the research findings

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present my research findings. This will begin with an overview of the six respondents in order to give an understanding of their professional contexts, careers and other pertinent information. The second part of the analysis will look at key themes that emerged from the data in relation to the original aims of this research as stipulated and referenced throughout thus far. Each theme will have a dedicated section but this is not to imply that there is no crossover between the themes and the discussion will be conducted considering this. The six key themes are as follows:

Changes in Headship

Generic Leadership

Schools as Businesses

Government Policy

The Market

Parents

These themes have a clear lineage back to the literature review in terms of each element being of relevance to managerialism and the headship role. The reasoning for the theme pertaining to ‘Parents’ will be detailed in section 4.4.6 below.

During the discussion of the findings a concurrent analysis will be made in reference to the research question and sub-questions as well as by way of reference to the literature review that formed the theoretical foundation upon which the research was grounded. It should be clearly noted that the discussion of the results will also take place during this section rather than taking place in a separate section. Chapter 5 will be an overall review of the results.

4.2 The Headteachers

4.2.1 Respondent 1: Catherine

Catherine began her teaching career in the north of England in 1978, she gained a diploma in teaching, the requisite qualification at the time and later completed a master's degree in Education. She became headteacher of a primary school (ages 3-11) in 1996. She does not know exactly how or why she became a headteacher and mentions, *"I had always been in teaching."* The school at which she became a headteacher was the same school at which she had served as the deputy headteacher for 18 months previously. The school had approximately 240 students, 8 teaching staff and 43 total staff (including teaching assistants and auxiliary staff).

The school was in an area of socioeconomic deprivation. As Catherine mentions:

"There was a high transition rate of children coming in and out of school because we were served by the high rise flats and there are 700 flats and the turnover was 700 units a year so some of them had 2-3 families in and out of them during the course of a year and the children would come to [our] school."

Catherine left her headship in 2002 after six years at the same school. She stated that she intended to return to headship but life took her in a different direction. She now works as an educational consultant for a variety of state schools in the north of England and also works as a coach, predominantly with school management teams, as well acting as a school governor for two local schools.

4.2.2 Respondent 2: Elizabeth

Elizabeth's teaching career began in 1962 after gaining a master's degree in foreign languages. She notes:

"I didn't really expect to be a head. I wanted to be a diplomat but women were supposed to be secretaries, nurses or teachers. I could see I could never get promoted in the UK so I went [overseas]."

She worked overseas for 33 years as a teacher, admissions officer and in 1975 as headteacher of the upper school at a private school. In 1980 she became headteacher

of an exclusive school (ages 3-14) with 350 students, 35 teaching staff and 50 total staff. In 1986 she took up her first headship in England at an exclusive independent secondary school (Ages 11-18) in the south of England. She notes that the challenges of this school was to:

“Get the school going again after a period of uncertainty.”

She notes that there were further challenges unique to the school:

“I had to learn on the job, managing 250 acres of land isn’t something you can learn from a course.”

Elizabeth left the school in 2000 and retired from headship. She was awarded an honorary Doctorate in Education for her work with a local university. She currently works as a recruitment consultant and school governance advisor as well as being on the board of various independent schools and charitable organisations.

4.2.3 Respondent 3: James

James gained a bachelor’s degree in Business Information Systems having being advised to do so by family members although he states, *“I always wanted to teach.”* After finishing his degree, he decided that he was going to be a teacher and completed a Post-Graduate Certificate in Primary Education (PGCE) subsequently commencing teaching in 1996. He moved to a middle school (ages 8-12) and becoming a headteacher in 2006 at a primary school (where he had been the deputy headteacher) in the north of England in a socioeconomically deprived area.

He feels that he became a headteacher by *“default”* having never really considering it early in his career. James remained at that school for a period of 5 years and decided to move on:

“I went to my new school in September to see could I really cut it and could I really do it...I had done ok there but I needed to test myself.”

Interestingly, James notes the differences between his previous school and his current school:

“The current school is entirely differently; you couldn’t have two different schools.”

I shall examine this in greater detail below and, indeed, it was this element of James's experience that convinced me to compare two such dissimilar state schools for the inexperienced headteachers' sample. James has now become Executive Headteacher (a term he dislikes) of two primary schools as part of a school federation.

4.2.4 Respondent 4: Charlotte

Charlotte has worked in the education field for 20 years having graduated with a bachelor's degree in Psychology and having completed a Post-Graduate Certificate in Primary Education (PGCE). She comes from a family of teachers with her grandparents, parents and now her daughter all having worked as teachers. In terms of becoming a headteacher, she notes:

"It never occurred to me not to become a headteacher, I always intended to be a headteacher from my first day."

She has been the headteacher at an exclusive preparatory school (ages 3-11 with 385 students, 50 teachers and 90 staff in total) in the south of England for six years having being deputy headteacher at the same school for three years before that. She had previously worked at another independent school as a teacher, head of year and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO).

She states that the school of which she is now headteacher is "*the school* [in the surrounding area] *that everybody wants to go to*". Charlotte is content to stay at the school but states that she would relish more of a challenge:

"I would like to have more to do. If I were in the state system, I would like to be a superhead, I would like to have about three schools, I would like to clone this school and like there to be more meat in it now. I have almost done everything that you can and there's not a lot of new stuff."

4.2.5 Respondent 5: Juliet

Juliet is in her second year of headship at an infant school (ages 4-7) in the north of England with 97 students, 7 teachers and 25 total staff. She had been at the school

for ten years prior to becoming the headteacher. She came to the teaching profession late having left school at 16. She studied for a part-time Open University bachelor's degree for six years and then completed a Primary Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). She realised she wanted to be a teacher after volunteering at her child's school.

Her school is in a socioeconomically deprived area (it is above the national average for free school meals and is way above the national average for SEN students) as she states:

"It is quite a deprived area; it is the same deprivation levels as in the inner cities [the school is in a quiet rural location]. There are some parents with higher aspirations but mainly they are lower income families, low aspirations of themselves, it has one of the lowest parental education rates in the county."

Juliet has completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship, which was a compulsory requirement at the time of her applying for the headship. She notes that she applied for her first headship because:

"I didn't like the idea that somebody [an external headteacher] could come into our school and lead it."

Juliet is about to take on a new headship at a school with the same demographic in the same locality; her responses were in relation to the school at which she was working when the interview took place.

4.2.6 Respondent 6: Margaret

Margaret is in her second year as a headteacher at a Primary school (ages 5-11) in an affluent area in the north of England. It is a state faith school and is also voluntary aided. The school is heavily oversubscribed and the number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. Prior to becoming the headteacher she was the deputy headteacher at the same school.

She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Education and has also completed various courses via the Open University and completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship that, as with Juliet, was a compulsory requirement at the

time of her applying for the headship. She has been working in primary schools for 36 years. For Margaret becoming a headteacher was a natural progression in her career and she realised she wanted to take on a full headship as followed:

“I did part-time acting head which I enjoyed and that spurred me into being a head.” (Margaret)

Margaret also has a role as a representative for her county on the organisational board that oversees the faith-based schools across a large portion of Northern England:

“I am also a representative for the [county] schools on the [faith organisation] for headteachers and again that is useful to meet up once a term because the policies, the main policies we run through the [faith] education society that gives advice onto the best way of writing policies and keeping them in the same way.” (Margaret)

Margaret’s school context is unique among the sample of headteachers insofar as although her school is a state school, it does receive support as stated above from a large faith organisation within which Margaret plays an active role. Therefore, the comparisons that can be drawn with the other schools will be valuable in addressing the research questions and sub-questions.

4.3 Themes

This section will provide the research findings in the form of six key themes. The themes were identified as a result of the process of data analysis as well as in conjunction with the research questions and sub-questions. As stated in the introduction the use of themes is not seeking to separate the discussion into disparate parts and cross-references will be made between the themes and throughout the discussion.

4.3.1 Changes in Headship

In this section I will examine the data in reference to the manner in which the headship role has changed over time. This analysis is important as such changes will proffer evidence as to how external factors have influenced headship and how

headships in different contexts, most especially the nature of the school, and its intake affect the job of the given headteacher.

I will begin by examining how the respondents understood the term ‘headteacher’ and its connotations. Elizabeth stated that:

“The term headteacher is a misnomer, they should be called head of school, most of them don’t teach at all, so why are they called headteachers? They don’t teach mostly.” (Elizabeth)

This is a pertinent point in terms of the changing role of headship, James noted that he did not have the time to teach, *“I don’t teach but I do try and get into the classroom and I do quite a bit of cover. I covered for two weeks that was hard [to find the time].” (James)* Juliet also recognised that her role was changing, *“I don’t teach half as much as I did a year ago because I can’t.” (Juliet)*

Whereas these headteachers did wish to teach, it is clear that the change in the roles made it difficult, if not impossible. The varied manner of tasks that the headteachers do is evidence of the pressures they experience as James notes:

“It so multifaceted; the personnel, the health and safety, the business side, so no I don’t know what it would be called.” (James)

Juliet also noted that she had a variety of time-consuming responsibilities that had nothing to do with teaching and learning:

“There is so much now, that my day is taken up by health and safety checks and meetings with finance people.” (Juliet)

James also noted the drive for ‘higher standards’ and the damaging consequences on teachers and subsequently the students:

“There is a lot of pressure on headteachers to raise standards and the challenge as well is not putting that pressure totally on to your staff. I am hearing horror stories, putting the pressure on the staff and the staff putting the pressure on the students and then ultimately it all falls apart.” (James)

The pressures seem to abate little between Juliet in her formative years of headship and the well-experienced James. As I will illustrate throughout this chapter, the data indicate changes that are not isolated to single cases but are born out in the experiences of the state school headteachers. Catherine remembers education before the Educational Reform Act of 1988:

“It was a much simpler world before 1988.” (Catherine)

In preference to the mandatory quantitative categorisations that schools have been bound to conform to during the past quarter of a century, Catherine recalls that pre-1988 judgments on school success:

“Would have been qualitative.” (Catherine)

It is not just the passing of time that has seen the role of the state school headteacher becoming increasingly fragmented. Within the state system itself there are clearly huge differences between schools as well as the roles that the headteachers now undertake. James, having moved recently from a state school in a deprived area to his current state school in an affluent area, states:

“We only struggle with school numbers because it is so expensive to live. In the old school virtually all of the children were from poor families, in the current school they are from very affluent families.” (James)

James recognises the huge difference in his role as primarily caused by the differing socioeconomic intake in the two schools:

“[his previous school] It was a socially deprived area and I really felt that a lot of my time was taken up with social work type of jobs and child protection and children in need and all types of things and some weeks I’d spend all week at case conferences, court group meetings, now I don’t begrudge that at all because the kids needed it but every time I was out I was not dealing with other things and there were some weeks I can honestly say that I wasn’t dealing with anything to do with teaching and learning, how can I go through a week without having anything to do with teaching and learning?” (James)

This is an indication of the manner in which socioeconomic factors are predominant in influencing the role of the given headteacher and the different pressures that the headteacher faces. The outcome of this being that pressures when applied as outlined above are proportional to the socioeconomic status of the school, especially regarding the background of its student intake. This is a clear reflection of how such headteachers find themselves in an increasingly more difficult position and in an energy sapping vicious circle in which they have to juggle finances:

“You have to get the best value that you can and you also want to make the best impact of the money that you are spending.” (Juliet)

Battling to get the best staff, *“Recruitment was a challenge, but I needed better teachers than all of the others because our kids were needier.” (Catherine)* and making huge personal commitments beyond any reasonable expectation:

“It takes over my life, I’ve worked 60-hour weeks during the last three weeks and I haven’t seen my kids for 2 days, but I love my job and I get lost in it, so you could get burnt out.” (James)

Charlotte’s and Elizabeth’s answers contrast greatly with James’s and Juliet’s when asked if there were any obstacles to their school’s success:

“No - because it is successful, it breeds success, it is the school that everybody wants to go to so you get the pupils that you want and you get the results at the end so it is a self-fulfilling prophecy.” (Charlotte)

And for Elizabeth *“There weren’t any great obstacles.” (Elizabeth)*

Suffice to say that the initial findings indicate the differences and pressures in such difficult contexts are vast and tangible. I would however like to qualify this assertion, as I will continue throughout this analysis, insofar as that whereas Charlotte and Elizabeth may not suffer or have suffered the same types of pressures in their headships as those in state schools, it is clear that headship in two exclusive and expensive independent schools does most definitely have its own challenges and undeniable pressures.

As Charlotte notes *“I could imagine if there were some reputational damage or something it wouldn’t take much, I don’t think, to throw a school of its perch.”* (Charlotte) and as Elizabeth modestly recalls that *“I was constantly waiting to get fired.”* (Elizabeth). This is a fate certainly more realistic and certainly more tangible for an independent school headteacher than a state school headteacher. The pressures on any headteacher when there is a failure to raise ‘standards’ is reflected here and is further evidence of the manner in which ‘performativity’ can be counterproductive.

In contrast to the headteachers’ varying experiences of difficulties within their schools, an area in which there was unanimity was the recognition of the importance of the headteacher to the success of the school:

“I’d say very important actually because you are the first part of school for everything parents contact you first and we keep everything going so extremely important.” (Margaret)

“Headship is crucial and getting the right match to school and head is crucial. I think you can have all of the qualifications to be a great head and you can be an outstanding teacher but at the end of the day it’s that match of context to personality that really matters.” (Catherine)

“Hugely. I think it is crucial.” (James)

“Hugely important, hugely important.” (Charlotte)

“I think it’s vital actually, but I don’t think the person doing it should think about how important they are.” (Elizabeth)

“Really pinnacle, if you have got a good headteacher and I think it shows in evidence from Ofsted inspections, it does seem to show that you can turn an Ofsted around.” (Juliet)

These responses echoed the findings of Southworth (1999) who notes that his respondents (interviewed in 1985):

“Understood that the influence of the headteacher was paramount to the school. Yet the ambition to become a head was not for self-aggrandisement.” (Southworth 1999:47)

The latter sentiment further mirrored by Elizabeth’s fear of dismissal, as well as the overall data, is consistent in illustrating the modesty and commitment of all six of the headteachers. Southworth’s study also noted that:

“Heads need to be visible and active participants in ‘their’ schools; what they attend to and comment on is influential. If heads are taken out of the school, or their presence is lessened, then so too is their influence and professional leadership. For these reasons then, the heads were discomforted by not always being able to participate in the educational leadership of the school.” (ibid:48)

It is most unfortunate that more than two decades after Southworth’s research that the situation seems to be significantly worse and the manner in which the state schools headteachers are addressing these matters is not sustainable for the individual headteacher of the system as a whole, especially considering the ever-increasing pressures outlined above. Unfortunately, these themes echo Webb and Vulliamy’s 2006 study:

“The role of the headteacher has become so diverse, expansive and responsive that although heads work to long term goals there is a sense that ‘getting on top of it all’ in the short term is impossible.” (Webb & Vulliamy 2006:138)

Headteachers in socioeconomically deprived areas are clearly in a difficult position. The outcome of this is clearly that they need to work above and beyond reasonable expectations just to maintain their schools. The huge difference in James’s working life after changing schools is noteworthy:

“It’s just not the same, it isn’t the same intensity, now I have got to the end of the year I have never worked so hard but I have never not been as emotionally drained, I have been able to do my job. I did 5 years and I was just emotionally drained because I couldn’t emotionally detach myself and I would go home thinking about certain children and worrying and I couldn’t sleep and I thought this is just taking

over my life, I can't leave work at work. Now I don't have those emotional attachments in the negative sense." (James)

A headteacher can surely only work in these conditions for a limited period of time. In a longitudinal study of the stages of a headteachers career, Earley & Weindling (1987) ascertained that:

"The NFER headteachers suggested that about seven years in one school was sufficient to see through a cohort of pupils and to have initiated most of the changes they wanted." (Earley & Weindling 1987:76)

James (five years) and Catherine (six years) moved on before this period and their replacements would (hugely improved by the work of individuals such as James and Catherine) have to work in the same manner as their predecessors just to stay afloat. That Elizabeth completed 15 years in a single school before retiring and Charlotte into her 7th year, with no intention of leaving, indicates that headteachers are more likely to stay in a school if the socioeconomic background of pupils is more affluent. Indeed, such is James's renewed energy that he is now the headteachers of two schools as part of a federation something that would have been impossible with the pressures of his previous school.

The language that the headteachers used to describe their role and the role of headteachers in general is interesting in terms of what we may deem to be 'managerialist' or that which Bourdieu (2001) refers to as the 'planetary vulgate'. It is noteworthy that the managerialist terminology in reference to their own strengths and their roles and responsibilities were prevalent in the state-school headteachers but not in the independent heads. For example, Catherine asserted that *'I know I am strategic.'* (Catherine)

The use of the term 'strategic' is striking, for Foskett the concept of strategic management is intrinsically linked to conceptions of the market and external relations:

"Strategic management is intimately involved with the institution's external environment...Strategic analysis is about ensuring that strategy is linked to the

market. The organisations within which it may operate, and comprises the market environment and the socio-political environment.” (Foskett 2003:131-132)

One explanation for the use of the terminology, especially as it is used in this sample, is the propagation of such terminology by way of government policies that necessitates any discourse of headship as being bound by such terminology, creating a speech community bound by managerialist discourse.

The changes in the role of headship, most especially in the state sector, result from the ways in which policy shifts have, most especially the reliance on a market model and quantitative judgments focussing on whole-scale educational homogeneity, adversely impacted upon the headteachers.

Although there is clearly a need for the headteacher to focus on teaching, learning and on ensuring the wellbeing of both teachers and students, it is clear that governmental initiatives have implicitly stated that the role of headteacher can be conducted by individuals from the business world with no teaching experience and no previous experience as school leaders.

This belief at the very heart of managerialization in the success of generic leadership takes place in the fertile ground propagated by market forces in education and decentralization as evidenced by the growth of academies and the demise of the Local Education Authorities. In the next section, I will further expand this discussion by analysing the data pertaining to generic leadership and its manifestation in headship in England.

4.3.2 Generic Leadership

The literature review examined the manner in which the National College for School Leadership, the National Standards for Headteachers and the National Professional Qualification of Headship attempted to codify the role of headship in England, irrespective of context, into generic leadership traits. Further evidence of the belief in the generic management and leadership of school was evidenced by a programme called ‘Tomorrow’s Heads’ which was launched by the National College for School Leadership in 2012 and which allowed those from non-teaching backgrounds to join

the programme.

This section is therefore concerned with how the headteachers respond to these changes, ideas and concepts. It will also analyse how their perception and understanding of their own careers and their own professional practice is intertwined with ideas of generic leadership. The key debate here is pertaining not just to the ideas that there are certain generic characteristics that make up a ‘successful’ headteacher but whether or not these characteristics can be ‘taught’ allowing a manager from any profession to become a headteacher.

The importance of the headteacher in a school’s success and progress was unanimously agreed upon by all of the headteachers, as outlined in the previous section. In reference to the ability of a non-teaching headteacher to be able to become a headteacher the responses also shared a commonality in disregarding this idea. Charlotte responded to the idea of the headteacher with no teaching experience as follows:

“No, I don’t think you could do it without the teaching experience and without being in classrooms full of children. You need to understand what makes the children tick.” (Charlotte)

Elizabeth was equally adamant and also noted the importance of the students in the role of the headteacher:

“You’ve got four constituencies, you got the board, the teachers, the parents and the children and it’s very different from being the boss of a business but it’s a different dynamic and that is something that you have to learn how to do... they need to care about children, if you don’t like children, why are you in it?” (Elizabeth)

James saw the centrality of the child as potentially endangered by people working in schools who are disinterested in children *“Why do you do the job? There are too many people who don’t even like kids who are doing the job, they are dangerous.” (James)* and noted in direct response to a non-teaching headteacher:

“I don’t see how someone who hasn’t taught can drive and raise academic standards and surely that’s what we are all about and while the business aspect is important we are ultimately there to get results and the best for the children.” (James)

Margaret supported this feeling:

“I think it’s knowing how the children develop and so it’s having that understanding of education and how children learn, which I think people would need to know because unless you are actually working with children it’s all the periphery things that you need to understand to get those children to learn really.” (Margaret)

As did Juliet, who also echoed Margaret’s feelings pertaining to the need for an understanding of child development:

“You can learn management on the job but the teaching which is a crucial part of the school. The experience of child development, I don’t see how you can have discussions with your staff if you have never taught. Parents also expect you to understand about teaching and learning, they want you to talk to them as a teacher, if you have never taught I don’t know how you could have those conversations.” (Juliet)

The data indicate that irrespective of the context of the respondents’ schools or the length of their experience that the ability of an individual with no educational experience to become a headteacher is near impossible and most certainly undesirable. The only way in which the concept could seemingly work is if the ‘headteacher’ actually had nothing to do with teaching and learning. Whereas that may be a school environment that increased managerialism and marketization could create, it is certainly not a notion that any of the headteachers see as being of benefit to the students of any given school.

In order to provide further evidence of this and to examine the managerialist belief in the ability for any individual to acquire generic leadership skills, I will examine the data pertaining to the leadership traits that the headteachers saw as their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the traits they saw as being difficult to ‘teach’ to someone coming into headship.

The data provide a response to the belief in generic skills and a generic manner of training for headteachers. Although, while not refuting the idea that there are generic characteristics (as will be seen below) the absolute centrality of context and the manner in which the headteachers is able to apply those skills in a specific school context is seen as of prime importance.

I will also examine the extent to which the headteachers have considered generic training programmes in order to enhance their headship skills. In terms of these skills, the headteachers were asked to list some of their strengths and they were as follows:

“I would say very open, transparent. I am very child-centred, I think of the child all the time, it comes from within.” (James)

“Open to ideas and new ways and I like children.” (Juliet)

“Very good at understanding what’s going on with people beneath the surface, very good at reading people which helps considerably.” (Charlotte) *“The whole idea of relationship building and connecting with people.” (Catherine)*

“I have got lots of energy and stamina. Stamina is absolutely vital for headship. I have ideas, if you have no ideas it doesn’t help. I think I can work well in a team. I am fairly perceptive about people. I am enthusiastic.” (Elizabeth)

“I’m open to ideas and I would like to think that I am a listening head and work within a team, I think that’s important. I am not afraid of work, I think you’ve got to have a drive behind you.” (Margaret)

It is interesting to note that there is little variation between the responses. However, it is evident that the strengths that the headteachers detail, ostensibly the characteristics that make them able to perform their jobs in an efficient and caring manner are difficult to transfer or adequately define as generic standards. Such statements and data both give support and also raise questions about the notion of training able to ‘create’ headteachers in a set mould.

Elizabeth noted three elements difficult to teach, although any ‘good leader’ could possess these: *“Charisma is very difficult to teach, if you haven’t got it, you haven’t got it but I don’t think it’s a vital attribute. I am not sure you can teach teamwork or to teach people to work well in a team. A desire to lead is almost born and I don’t think you can teach that.”* (Elizabeth)

James notes that *“A lot of the skills do come from within because it’s hard to communicate if you are not a communicator, you can’t learn to be a team player.”* (James)

Charlotte states: *“I think authority is innate, it is almost impossible to teach that if you haven’t got it. Very difficult to teach somebody to be organized who is not instinctively organized you either think methodically or you don’t. I also think dealing with people is not something you can teach someone how to do, you either have an empathy and an instinct for doing it or you haven’t. There is an awful lot of headship that can’t be taught.”* (Charlotte)

There is a very common theme again insofar as the idea of a ‘generic’ set of standards or competencies cannot be categorized or set in curricula in the manner preferred and desired by enforced national standards, competencies and training programmes. Indeed, that only one of the six respondents has a master’s degree in education raises a question about the concept that successful headship is dependant or enhanced by qualifications.

Charlotte’s comment is pertinent, *“No qualification would have prepared me more, doing the job is the best qualification that you can have. No qualification can prepare you for what it is like.”* (Charlotte)

James concurs with this sentiment in reference to the NPQH, *“I can’t really say it prepared me...I was actually on the job, so I suppose to some extent we were there talking about it and I was able to talk about my day to day experience at the current time...it was too theoretical, I was thinking the theory and the job don’t really marry up.”* (James)

In conclusion, the data have shown that the concept of generic leadership needs significant qualification when compared to these headteachers' views about the requirements of being a successful headteacher, a role that requires specialized educational knowledge, expertise and experience, as well personal characteristics in keeping with a commitment to ensuring the best for young people. Without such an interest, the job would be unmanageable as reflected in the data.

In spite of the optimism outlined by the respondents and although the governmental push with specific regard to the non-educational headteacher has been curtailed, the true test of any ideological foundation is its ability to exist and manifest in a manner of ways. Therefore, the current drive towards free schools is evidence of the government's continued determination to de-professionalise education and make its tradecraft appear generic.

The perpetuation and manifestation of such ideologies continues to pervade and it seems that the state school headteachers in the study are confronting such policies,

"You have to stick to your principles and even if the government are telling you one thing and you don't believe in it, I don't think you should have to change your principles to fit in with the government and you have to be very brave to do that."
(Juliet)

In this section, the data have refuted the belief that a manager with no professional school experience could become a headteacher that the role of the headteacher can be broken down into a list of pre-determined standards or codified in order for the government to ensure schools are run in accordance with a pre-agreed agenda. Indeed, there are certain generic skills that were agreed upon but the headteachers were united in their belief that many of these were difficult to teach.

As the headteachers reject the idea of generic leadership traits and of generic leadership training, what is clear is the belief in the necessity of experience and of inherent personal characteristics that cannot be taught. However, this raises a question about the validity of their claims. I would posit that from a managerialist perspective, interested in quantitative data, such experience is not valid but that from a qualitative perspective, interested in subjective experience, the claims made

by the headteachers regarding their own strengths are indeed valid and do contribute to the understanding of the area.

The data was equally resounding in its rejection of the idea that a qualification could have or would have had a positive impact on the headteachers in terms of assisting them in any significant way in their ability to do their jobs. In the next section, my analysis will examine the ways in which the respondents viewed the relationship between schools and the business world and the manners in which they perceived the positive and negative aspects of past, present and future moves for schools to operate in line with a business model.

4.3.3 Schools as Businesses

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, it is clear that the themes into which the data have been sorted are intertwined and interconnected, indeed inescapable from each other. This is certainly true for this section and the preceding section insofar as the ‘schools as businesses’ philosophy is fundamentally the basis for the belief that school can therefore be run by way of a non-educator. Concomitant are the beliefs in the school improvement and school effective movements, as well as the power of the ‘superhead’, and these issues will also be addressed.

One notable element of the analysis thus far has been the manner in which some of the areas have provided similar responses from all of the headteachers irrespective of their length of experience or school context. In terms of the notion of the manner in which schools can be run as businesses the headteachers were again unanimous in their responses and this may initially be perceived as being a result of the utter incompatibility of such ideologies with sound educational practice.

The independent headteachers were both unanimous in their responses to the manner in which a school can be run in the same way as a business, Elizabeth illustrated her viewpoint with a mantra that she used with her staff, *“A school is not a business but we must be business-like.” (Elizabeth)*. The latter element of this statement is very interesting insofar as it is an inadvertent response to those who would argue that a

school's disassociation from a business model would subsequently impact upon its effectiveness.

For Charlotte the differences between schools and businesses again reflected a welfarist understanding in the same way that she drew a distinction between the role of a headteacher and a non-educational headteacher, *"The difference is the human element, it would not be there in the same way and it is the engagement with the teachers, the pupils and the parents which is the bit of the job that I love most."* (Charlotte)

However, Charlotte did recognise that there were some elements from the business world that may benefit a school environment, *"Schools could be more rigorous in how they deal with staffing issues... Schools are very forgiving of people which does not necessarily lead to a successful business outcome."* (Charlotte).

The data also revealed areas in which the headteachers believed that there were elements of a business model in the running of a school and they understood the need for good sound financial practice as stated by Catherine:

"For many years schools have been seen as a medium size enterprise when you think of the number of people that are employed by schools, so in terms of staff they are quite decent enterprises...a good school will have a very clear financial management and will be accountable for what it spends, you always seek to keep in credit." (Catherine)

Elizabeth felt the same way:

"You can't do it in the same way as a business but you have to make the budget work, you would close eventually." (Elizabeth)

There was clear evidence that dealing with finance and learning more about finance in itself was not a problem:

"It would be nice to really understand finance." (Elizabeth)

James notes how collaboration between schools could also help with finances:

“Why not collaborate [as schools] and have joint business managers and have economies of scale by buying together, again every school has traditionally done things differently. One benefit is that schools link together. That sort of business outlook will only help schools in the future.” (James)

However, as discussed in the literature view and below in Section 4.4.5.2, competition between schools makes such collaboration unlikely, even though it would benefit the schools and ultimately the students. For the state school headteachers, it was not the financial aspects *per se* that caused them difficulties but inadequate funding:

“One of the obstacles was financial because being a smaller school there wasn’t the ability to have students out of class as all teachers were engaged in teaching and not doing planning [were not given personal planning time]. I would have loved more staff, loved a learning mentor.” (Catherine)

And the manner of gaining extra funding:

“Obviously, children come with money attached, so the more we’ve got the better, it’s very hard though because you don’t want to be seen as poaching children from other schools.” (Juliet)

James reflects that his Business degree, “...helps in patches really certainly when it comes to the financial side that’s helped.” But conversely, “schools are so different, it’s not really the same [as a business] at all.” (James)

Therefore, initiatives that promote ‘business leaders’ as being able to manage schools in accordance with ‘best business practice’ are once again flawed when contrasted against the data. The issues pertaining to the consequences of market driven policies and the dire consequences for funding and ultimately the practices of the headteachers will be discussed below in Section 4.4.5.

In this section, I would like to conclude by examining the data with reference to a key distinction that the headteachers made between schools and businesses. The aspect that was highlighted was the manner in which the progress of schools is measured in the same manner as businesses. As a reminder, the managerialist

perception of organizations is quite simply that they are similar and can be managed in the same way. This viewpoint ultimately looks for quantitative data in judging effective and efficiency, and conversely ineffectiveness and inefficiency.

However, if this perspective is fundamentally flawed (see Hoyle & Robinson 2003 above) it did not dissuade managerialist policies from determining that the manner in which the efficiency of schools could best be judged was by examination results and even Ofsted reporting, a further perpetuation of a market-driven culture of ‘failure and success’. As Hamilton (1998) argues,

“OFSTED appears to espouse a straightforward, linear model of causality. In linear systems, a straightforward cause leads to a straightforward effect. In nonlinear systems the outcome is so sensitive to initial conditions that a miniscule change in the situation at the beginning of the process may result in a large difference at the end.” (Hamilton in Slee, Tomlinson & Weiner 1998:14)

The perceptions of the headteachers in this study clearly concur with the second assertion regarding a nonlinear model of causality. Conversely, the data contradicts a linear model:

“With children it’s so different it’s very hard even when you are target setting for a single child during a year, family break up, they can get ill, something happens, no children are ever the same and you can’t set targets for children based on where they have been all the time because it just doesn’t work.” (Juliet)

This is further evidence of the problems associated with an outcome-based view of schools and the concept of generic plans and procedures as espoused by the ubiquitous school improvement literature. As Juliet so aptly states it, *“you can have a business plan but when you have children involved it doesn’t seem quite as easy as that, they are not little robots.” (Julie)*

And for Margaret,

“I think probably one of the things that always concerns me every year is obviously our SAT results because that’s always very public. People don’t know the story

behind children's successes or why they got a level three instead of a level 4 but we know very well that those children have worked their socks off." (Margaret)

This is also supported by Catherine's sentiments:

"You can have a strong cohort of children that will give you some very good results, you can have some much more erratic cohorts of children that may be very low performing or have a significant number of special needs children and because of that with the best will in the world with the best teaching in the world you may still not get the outcomes, the output and the results that you would perhaps wish to see if you were looking for year on year improvement." (Catherine)

Catherine encapsulates the problem and again highlights that an ill-considered perspective of school performance as purely based on outcomes and ultimately as a manner of judging a headteacher's performance is not compatible with the unique nature of schools and is, once again evidence of this theoretical position's incompatibility when children are the 'product'.

Catherine's comments also allude to a further problem that would adversely impact upon schools in socioeconomically deprived areas. As Catherine notes even within the *same* school results within the space of only a year can be 'erratic'. If such differences can occur in the same school, with a similar cohort and generally the same teaching staff and school environment, what happens when all of those factors and variables are shifted?

James's experience of working in two dissimilar schools, both in the state system, again provides an indication of how the aforementioned factors separate such disparate schools, he states in terms of how a 'failing' school is judged:

"It's crudely a school that doesn't have enough level 4s or level 5s. I don't agree with that because it's not a level-playing field. [Comparing his previous school to current school] The raw materials are hugely different, for example students with EAL or SEN." (James)

Certainly, in socioeconomically deprived areas the concentration of students who speak English as an additional language tends to be disproportionately high. Any

system of measurement that fails to consider the difference in what James deems the '*raw materials*' is fundamentally unsound as demonstrated by the responses from the headteachers outlined in this section. These data therefore raise fundamental questions about the application of managerialist approaches to education.

However, managerialism is not an entity but rather a concept derived from a certain set of ideological beliefs. The driving force behind such managerialist initiatives and policies in England is, of course, the incumbent governments who since 1988 have sought to propagate managerialist ideas. In the next section, I will therefore examine the data in terms of how governmental actions in the forms of policies, initiatives and discourses have affected the headteachers.

4.3.4 Government Policy

I will begin by briefly considering the differences in the level of impact between the state school headteachers' perceptions and the independent school headteachers' perceptions of how government policy affects them. Perhaps the most striking example of this came from Charlotte who stated that:

"It [government policy] doesn't affect us at all other than genuine interest of what is going on out there." (Charlotte)

In this brief response, three important points can be garnered. Firstly, government policy, in stark contrast to responses from the state school headteachers as will be outlined below, is of no consequence; secondly that there is an interest from the independent sector in the state sector from a professional perspective and thirdly, that Charlotte conceptualises the state sector as '*out there*' (ostensibly a different entity to the sphere of independent schools).

In the previous three sections there were data indicating elements of alignment between all of the headteachers. However, it is in the area of governmental policy and its impact on the state school headteachers that the data detailed a vast difference between the experiences of the headteachers. For Elizabeth, her perception of what she saw as governmental interference, convinced her to remain in the independent sector:

“I was in the independent sector because of the freedom that you had, you had autonomy and you didn’t have to sign every single form that the poor old state schools had to.” (Elizabeth)

She clearly sympathises for those in state schools and she openly recognises the benefits of not being betrothed to government policy:

“They basically just left us in peace most of the time, it was great. One of the things you don’t want is for teachers’ creativity to be stifled, the problem with the government sector is that it is so prescribed that the creativity was squashed and then it’s no fun to be a teacher if you can’t be a bit creative.” (Elizabeth)

Apparent also is how Elizabeth felt government policy affected teachers. Charlotte also notes the benefits of not having to deal with standardisation from government in terms of written curricula:

“It is lovely to be able to do is to tear the whole lot up and decide what it is they should learn.” (Charlotte)

It is worth remembering that Elizabeth’s headship in the UK from 1985 to 2000 spanned two distinct governments who brought in sweeping changes to education and that Charlotte’s career as a headteacher has spanned the end of the Labour government’s tenure and for the whole of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition and yet there is no impact on their schools or impact on their ability to carry out their role.

For Juliet the lot of the state school headteacher in contrast with that of the independent school headteacher is clear:

“You have to go ahead with it [directives], I’m not an independent school, and the results go onto county, onto national tables.” (Juliet)

Indeed, the stakes are high for state schools. The data proffered some very real examples of how the day-to-day working lives of the headteachers and their ability to do their best for their schools were compromised as a result of governmental

interference. Whereas Charlotte was able to ‘tear up’ the curriculum, the experiences for state-school heads were markedly different:

“There are drastic changes, we have no idea what the curriculum is going to look like, and everything is last minute. This year the SAT tests have been a farce, they weren’t confirmed until the last minute.” (James)

For Juliet:

“It is very depressing being in education because the government are making all these changes but they are not actually thinking them through they are just forcing them on schools to take up and make the best of it but nothing’s finished, they haven’t come up with the final parts of the early year’s curriculum and we are meant to start teaching in September.” (Juliet)

Juliet’s exasperation is all too apparent and the fact that a newly appointed headteacher states that ‘it is very depressing being in education’ due to the result of governmental actions is particularly disturbing. Especially as these perceptions are mirrored by Margaret who cited her greatest obstacle as:

“Time, time to put things in place that we think as right and that it is having that time to do it because with the new curriculum for example that was whizzed in... The difficulty is, sometimes they are doing it, change for change’s sake and sometimes not giving time for things to develop to suit the school.” (Margaret)

James, whose career has spanned two governments, notes the difference between the two:

“At least with the last government we had a clear idea of where we were going. We don’t seem to have a definite direction about where we are going, one week you hear something and another week you hear something else and also the communication we get as headteachers now is all done by email or website but you hear snippets of information on the radio or on the television. Nobody seems to know what is going on and this must be difficult for new heads, they must feel vulnerable” (James)

James's reflection is certainly supported by Juliet's and Catherine's experiences. The difficulties and pressures that these headteachers are facing are palpable. There are equally tangible consequences in the headteachers' professional standing and confidence, as James notes, *"you can feel quite vulnerable at times because you are going to get judged by those criteria but you don't even know what they are looking for, that's hard... It makes me feel incompetent as I can't give my staff the information."* (James).

Indeed, this is an invidious position insofar as these headteachers are fully aware of the necessity to adhere to government policy and initiatives, as Juliet states, *"It does affect you a lot especially Ofsted because obviously everyone wants the best Ofsted."* (Juliet).

The inescapable necessity of a good Ofsted report is perpetuated by a market model in which the headteachers are locked into a system that they are bound to compete in. Perhaps due the huge upheaval that the state school headteachers are facing, the pressures seem to be equal regardless of their level of experience. Indeed, the pressures from government even supersede the differences that James has found between his two disparate schools, *"It is the worst year I have seen nationally."* (James).

Having retired more than a decade earlier and having had a career in education that spanned some of the widest reforms ever seen in the state sector, Catherine remained pragmatic,

"The government will do what it needs to, to get its agenda heard but I think a good head will always find a way around to do what matters most." (Catherine)

These sentiments reflect Catherine's extensive experience and her positivity and pragmatism are evidently factors that ensured her school remained successful. Unfortunately, such success was in spite of rather than because of any external assistance, as she notes,

“The LEA weren’t overly supportive, I didn’t see them and I understand now that it was because we weren’t a school on their radar, they basically left me to it.”

(Catherine)

Such pragmatism is not only limited to those with the benefit of hindsight:

“You have to stick to your principles and even if the government are telling you one thing and you don’t believe in it I don’t think you should have to change your principles to fit in with the government.” (Juliet)

James agrees, *“Don’t just jump and do what they say, take time and think about it.”*

(James)

Again, the role of government in state-funded education is to support schools but the enforced manoeuvrings of the headteachers in dealing with governmental impositions in order to ensure the best for their students is evidently frustrating, time-consuming and, in the long-term, detrimental to schools.

Throughout the data there was no party political agenda stated by any of the respondents and their comments were made about ‘governments’ rather than the political parties themselves. This is an important distinction as perspectives in education can be highly politicized but for the headteachers their key consideration is the manner in which a given government’s actions impacted upon their schools rather than the political parties themselves.

Proponents of free schools or academies may cite this initial evidence as support for such initiatives but, on the contrary, any support for decentralisation is wholly rejected by the state school headteachers. The headteachers bemoaned the lack of support and the conflicting communications, they want state support, they want governmental and local authority assistance but the manner in which it is offered is recognised as being inadequate at best and counterproductive at worst.

The consensus regarding this lack of meaningful and considered support was clear and echoes the views espoused by Catherine above in reference to her contact with the LEA. Margaret also reflects on the manner in which she has seen her LEA change as a results of funding cuts:

“The LEA are super but they are diminishing and diminishing. This year in particular the amount of advisors has dropped considerably. They are very supportive but a lot have taken early retirement... (Because the [County] authority had to cut back on millions of pounds and there is a wealth of knowledge gone from the authority, that’s my concern.” (Margaret)

Juliet, who as a new head surely needs support, has found confusion rather than advice, even from her union:

“In schools, we were looking at performance related pay models and the union said just wait but you can’t really wait because if Ofsted come and you haven’t got one ready.” (Juliet)

The same is true for James:

“We are almost left alone and I have only had official contact from the LEA twice and that’s with an Ofsted and they have just left us alone and it’s ok and it’s good and they are leaving me alone and trusting you but by the same token it’s got to the end of the year and I feel like I haven’t felt up to date with what’s going on...it’s easy to become detached from the rest and now the school has become an island on its own.” (James)

The data reflects Grace’s (2007) argument:

“While the majority of headteachers have welcomed the greater freedom for manoeuvre involved in local management of schools, they have wished to operate that freedom in a responsible relationship with reformed local, democracy in education, and not as individual cultural entrepreneurs in the marketplace.” (Grace 2007:313-314)

Their coping strategies for this are predictable. Juliet notes that she seeks solace in a local group of headteachers:

“It’s a challenge to keep ahead with national initiatives and changes, especially at the moment, there is just so much changing and it is really important to be aware of those changes being part of headteacher cluster helps.” (Juliet)

A similar group is also of great benefit to Margaret who noted:

“We’ve all got our little own identities but as [the area] heads as well, we do get on ourselves and we do meet up. So certain things we discuss together and we come together as well.” (Margaret)

Grace (2007) again sees such actions as common in the circumstances that respondents have detailed:

“The intensification of external pressures is causing some headteachers to combine together in local and regional groupings more intensively than before.” (ibid:317)

The position of the state school headteachers is again in contrast to independent school headteachers, although the term independent is something of a misnomer. Whereas, the data from the state school headteachers display a lack of support, independent schools have bodies such as the Independent Schools Council and the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference, with only 1,257 independent schools in England (www.isc.co.uk) compared to 24,372 state schools (www.gov.uk).

It is clear to see that the decentralization of support for the latter, in contrast to the extensive network for the former is not a viable manner in which to ensure state schools are able to give their students the same chances to succeed as students in independent schools.

In conclusion, the data illustrate a seemingly irreconcilable difficulty concerning the manner in which government policy, ostensibly as an extension of party political ideologies and electioneering, has a harmful impact on the state school headteachers notable in its contrast to the impact on the independent school headteachers. In accordance with the existing literature it is clear that this corresponds with a definite and predictable pattern of unwelcome pressure on headteachers.

However, what is most striking about the data in contrast to previous studies is the extent to which government intervention is affecting the headteachers and their ability to do their jobs, equally pertinent is the increasing sense of isolation felt by the headteachers, which can be seen as a result policies aimed at furthering an agenda of decentralization.

4.3.5 The Market

In this section, I will review the data pertaining to two areas that are intrinsically bound by way of a complex form of interdependent relationships. The areas are the concept of **failing schools** and **competition**. The examination of the data in reference to failing schools will seek to address what the headteachers believe to be the main characteristics of a ‘failing’ school and the reasons why a school ‘fails’.

It should be noted that the concept of markets in education is the belief that by providing the individual with the choice to select a school, a market will be established in which competition will lead to the improvement of schools and that parents will have a greater variety of schools from which to make an informed selection. However, market conditions create losers as well as winners and this is no different in the case of education markets, as Lauder and Hughes (1999) assert:

“The fundamental problem with education markets is that they are designed so that some schools will fail. In allowing some schools to fail, policy makers are also allowing the students in these schools to fail.” (Lauder & Hughes 1999:134)

In the area of competition, the analysis will highlight the positives and negatives of competition as detailed by the respondents as well as the manner in which the headteachers addressed the issue of competition within their own contexts.

4.3.5.1 Failing Schools

There was commonality in the headteachers’ initial responses to reasons behind an unsuccessful school. Elizabeth notes, *“if you’ve got a rotten head who doesn’t work hard and the teacher’s don’t want to work for that person then it can’t work”*, for James *“I think a lot of failing schools come down to poor leadership.”*, Catherine stated, *“Poor leadership and management is one of the key causes of an underperforming school.”* and for Margaret, *“Leadership would be questioned and the input of the governors within that, they would need to develop that team as well as looking at staffing and looking at the quality of the teaching.”* (Margaret)

However, it is interesting that Charlotte recognises the background of the students as being a factor in the ‘failing’ school but for those within the state system did not:

“A lot due to the culture the children are brought up in and the parental expectations and therefore what the children’s expectations are. I do think parental expectations and parental support has a huge impact on the success of a school.” (Charlotte)

However, when examining the data in greater depth and focusing on the areas that the headteachers felt made a ‘successful’ school, there was some incongruity in the message. For example, Elizabeth noted that a good school:

“One is supportive parents, if they don’t support the school’s aims you can’t do a lot.” (Elizabeth)

Juliet also noted the importance of parents to a good school and also a rather more ephemeral sense of a good school:

“The kind of caring atmosphere that the staff and pupils have together so that there is a trust between both. And also parents, you know, when parents come and chat each day you’ve got that trusting relationship.” (Juliet)

As the data have revealed, the headteachers who have taken part in the study have had success in spite of difficult conditions and it is therefore not surprising that, as a result of modesty, they would not feel that they had done anything that could not be replicated, as James states, *“I am not Superman” (James)*. However, it is clear the data shows the efforts of the state school headteachers are exceptional and they require a high degree of emotional fortitude.

It would be understandable for a headteacher not to be able to perform to this level and without such self-sacrifice, it is doubtful whether the headteacher could be successful without huge personal selflessness. The inverse of the Charlotte’s sentiments that *‘success breeds success’* begins to emerge as a recurrent theme. The manner in which the cycle of poverty occurs is reflected in ‘failing’ schools in that which may be deemed a ‘cycle of failure’.

4.3.5.2 Competition

The data reflected various responses in relation to school competition and I will unravel these intertwined perspectives in this sub-section. The paradox of markets is

stated quite clearly by Charlotte, who as the headteacher of a leading and oversubscribed preparatory school, notes the luxury of being the first choice and also notes how competition can be of benefit to other schools:

“We aren’t in competition as the parents all want them to come here and the other schools are their second choice. I see that other schools have taken a number of things that we have done and so I think the competition helps.” (Charlotte)

However, Charlotte was aware of the detrimental impact of competition and the ‘cycle of failure’ to which I referred above:

“It must damage the ones who don’t get the pupils they want, this will lessen the numbers and therefore the academic standards of the ones who don’t get the pupils.” (Charlotte)

For Elizabeth, while recognizing the nature of competition between schools, the fate, in terms of the negative elements of competition, was rather more in the hands of the given headteachers:

“It’s very dog eat dog...if you like the thrill of the chase you want to beat them and it gets you up. If you care about winning for the kids then yes, it does have a positive effect. It’s not [a negative thing] if you don’t let it be.” (Elizabeth)

Juliet also notes the positive element of competition:

“It makes you work harder to make yours the best.” (Juliet)

The context does determine the responses of the headteachers and aside from the fact that Elizabeth was the headteacher of an exclusive private school is the fact the number of competitors and their proximity to the given school, as well as the number of students for whom the school is competing will amplify the impact of competition. By contrast, James notes the positive element of competition, especially in his current context where there is very little competition,

“Competition is healthy because when you are the only school, you get complacent.” (James)

The contrast with his previous school context, aside from the socioeconomic elements referred to above are striking:

“The problem with more competition, you are more reluctant to work together because you are still competitors you are competing for the same bums on seats and that is £2000 per child, you lose a few kids to the school down the road and you are a £6000 down which could mean a member of support staff that you would lose. You were careful about how much you gave.” (James)

Again in reference to James’s current context he notes how his practice has changed and how headteachers are morally discombobulated at having to make decisions such as this:

“Now we can collaborate a lot more and not be guarded against what [we] give [because there is not as much local competition]. This is wrong because we should all want to be good schools because we should all care about children nationally but because of the way that funding is structured we still have to think about bums on seats.” (James)

There is now clear evidence, aside from the pressures on headteachers that were detailed above, of how managerialist policies have changed the role of headship. Indeed, without acting in a manner befitting a managerialist style the headteachers would ultimately lose pupils and funding, this unenviable position and the Faustian choice clearly causes moral and ethical decisions to be made not incumbent with a welfarist perspective. James concludes that this is a direct result of policy:

“If the funding were equal and not pupil driven then that would help. But with the current model pupils mean jobs and security.” (James)

James’s final point is poignant insofar as the inability of a school to recruit greater numbers of students will ultimately threaten his staffs’ livelihoods and ultimately the success of the school. For Juliet, the paradox between competition and collegiality is stated as:

“You still need to have a good relationship with your local school because you don’t want to fall out with anybody. We are all working together for children.” (Juliet)

The data thus far have been an illustration of competition based on the experiences of headteachers whose schools, while in a variety of different contexts, are nonetheless schools that are successful both in terms of their reputations and by way of a rather more crude assertion that they are deemed to be not failing. Of great note is Margaret's explanation of a school in her locality:

"There is one school and it's been unfortunate because they have had special measures so that automatically affects numbers and parents want to move, they then have difficulties recruiting staff, the head hasn't been well either and it has been mooted that they are going to federate with another school as well so I think that is the difficulty, when you get a bad Ofsted and then people want to move because they want the best for their child." (Margaret)

It is this oft-repeated occurrence of school failure due to falling numbers and reputational loss that highlights the inadequacies of the market model. Aside from the managerialist adaptations that the headteachers have had to make to their practice, the most pronounced consequence and the most damaging for staff, parents, pupils and communities is that of a school being driven out of existence as a result of competition.

Halsted (1994) sums up the problems of markets, school effectiveness criteria and the incompatibility of the school-business model:

"The problem is that schools are not a true market situation. First, there are limits to their capacity to expand to take account of increased consumer demand. Second, the government is seeking to define the criteria by which schools are judged... Third, education is not a commodity. (Halsted 1994:14)

This vicious circle, contrived by a definitive set of policies, looks set to continue:

"The negative aspects of competition are going to grow more and more."
(Catherine)

4.3.6 Parents:

In this section I will analyse the data regarding parents. Indeed, this area yielded more data and led to a greater understanding of the importance of the area than I had envisaged, therefore I will split the analysis into four areas as well as provided some additional commentary from the associated literature. The areas are the impact of parental background on the school, how parents choose schools, how schools attract parents and which parents are adversely affected by school competition and the concept of parental choice.

4.3.6.1 Parental Impact

Irrespective of the headteachers' context, the role of the parents was cited as being both a positive factor and an obstacle, as well as a factor upon which they expended a great deal of time and effort. Charlotte reflected that:

“Parents are very challenging and increasingly so, ever more demanding.”
(Charlotte)

As may be expected at an independent school with high fees, the challenges for Charlotte came from parental expectations and the manner in which an independent school headteacher is required to interact with parents differs from that which, ostensibly due to time factors, state school headteachers would have time to do:

“You have to see them one at a time, there is no catch all answer, they would hate there to be a solution that they thought you were applying a sticking plaster to, they really want your time and your insight and your input.” (Charlotte)

For Elizabeth there has been an ever-increasing demand from parents at independent schools due to a change in the background of parents:

“Some of the parents now are what I called arriviste. In the independent schools, the people with the old money don't have the money any more for the fees and so the nouveau riches now have the money for the fees and they are much more demanding and much less informed.” (Elizabeth)

Again, it is clear that the demands on the headteachers of independent schools are great and as Elizabeth's assertion regarding the change in the parent body from 'old money' to the 'arriviste nouveau riches' has had a negative impact in terms of parental expectations and understanding of the given school's purpose. Indeed, any incongruity in understanding between parents and schools is bound to have an explicit impact on the headteacher, the parents and certainly the individual pupil.

It is without question that the negative elements of any such circumstances are far more pronounced in the state school system as evidenced by Juliet's reflections about parents in a socioeconomically deprived area:

"The hardest thing in getting parents into the school is their confidence and their trust in teachers. So the parents don't have high aspirations for their own education. We just want them in so that they can trust us...they say 'I hated school, I couldn't wait to get out of it.'" (Juliet)

Indeed, even though Elizabeth's and Juliet's schools are at polar opposites in terms of the socioeconomic backgrounds of their parents, the lack of understanding of the given school's aims due to the parents not having had the same educational experience as that which their children are receiving are indeed similar. Catherine's experience of parents was similar to Juliet's:

"There were fights in the playgrounds with parents and the children emulated that, it was a fragile culture. We turned that around and the majority of parents saw us a friendly welcome open school." (Catherine)

The incredible pressures befalling the state headteachers are again amplified by Catherine's reflection of parents fighting in the playgrounds, an image that is so wholly contrary to the atmosphere of a safe educational environment. When schools are battling for student numbers, the socioeconomic background of the parents may serve to impact on other parents choosing the school, as Catherine poignantly recalls:

"I couldn't stop parents going to a school where kids looked healthier and had better things." (Catherine)

James experience as a headteacher in two state schools with very different socioeconomic backgrounds is again pertinent in understanding the stresses that the socioeconomic context of the parent body places on the headteachers:

“The parents and the parental support in the old school, it was non-existent.”
(James)

Juliet reiterates this lack of support and the reasoning behind such reticence:

“The hardest thing in getting parents into the school is their confidence and their trust in teachers.” (Juliet)

Juliet building the confidence of her parents to come to the school contrasts starkly with the manner in which Charlotte is bound to engage with the parents at her school.

4.3.6.2 Attracting Parents

In order to make a school more competitive, as necessitated for the given school to remain successful, the headteachers all recognised the need to implement systems and introduce practices that would make their schools appear more attractive to parents. There are similarities in the practices that the headteachers used irrespective of context:

“To make us more attractive we had to get better facilities and better result and smarten up the place and get the children going and get them excited. We made strenuous efforts with the prospectus. We had a photographer who took 23,000 photos for the prospectus.” (Elizabeth)

Catherine also saw the benefits of such exposure although she had to rely on a more pragmatic approach in order to market her school and its achievements effectively:

“We marketed, got our photograph in the papers doing lovely things, one of my teacher’s husband worked as a photographer for the local paper so we probably got more than our fair share of stories.” (Catherine)

Catherine also made great strides in forming links with the local community again using pragmatism to ensure the best for her students:

“We did a lot of high profile work with [the local shopping centre]. Tried to get involved in as many things as we could to give children experiences that they had never had, we tried to give them those experiences at school. We tried to get some intense business links and the factory then sponsored us. We spent a lot of time out in the community trying to promote the message.” (Catherine)

It is clear that a failure to have done this, although conforming to the managerialist model, would have been of great detriment to the school’s ability to not just to function, but to exist. For Charlotte, there is a great deal more time to engage with parents and in contrast to Juliet, getting parents into the school is not an issue for a highly oversubscribed and exclusive independent school. In order to meet the demand Charlotte states:

“I have open mornings every Wednesday.” (Charlotte)

Margaret’s experience in an affluent area and in an oversubscribed school is more similar to Charlotte’s than to the other state school headteachers:

“They always come and they like to visit and I always make sure that I show them around which surprises them and surprises me to know that some heads don’t show their new parents around whereas we always make a point of that because I think that that’s important.” (Margaret)

For Margaret the website is also a factor and again the manner in which such elements can be used to attract parents from more educated and affluent backgrounds is bereft from the techniques espoused by the other state school headteachers:

“The website to attract parents and say ‘oh, I would like to look at that school’.” (Margaret)

A recurring theme is that the headteachers in the independent schools and the school with a more affluent socioeconomic intake have a less difficult task in attracting

parents than those in the socioeconomically deprived areas. Again the cycle of failure is all too clear.

The notion that James or Catherine would have had the time to show parents around the school individually is difficult to envisage. Indeed, time taken up with the generic problems associated with children from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds would make such practices impossible. Thereby, losing the very parents who would expect such treatment and whose children would be considered good ‘customers’.

In terms of the explicit ‘marketing’, it is also clear that the headteachers in the socioeconomically deprived schools had to work harder at ensuring the reputation of the school was correct, the problem for them was getting *any* parents into the school.

Catherine used her full gamut of skills to ensure not that she got the best students but that she did everything in her power to make the school the best that it could be.

James’s change of context also provides a solid illustration of the huge differences facing state school headteachers who, irrespective of such socioeconomic polarities, are judged by the same instruments that seek to further edify the successful and grind down the unsuccessful. The data send a clear message that headteachers are succeeding in spite of governmental actions rather than because of them.

4.3.6.3 Parental Choice

The manner in which parents choose schools was initially similar irrespective of the school context. For all of the heads ‘word of mouth’ and the reputation of the school were of great importance:

“It is word of mouth, they go to the dinner parties [and talk about the school].”

(Charlotte) “If you asked a parent how they found out about the school they will always say, my friend told me.” (Elizabeth) “They talk to other

parents.” (Margaret) “Reputation within the community, what friends and neighbours say.” (Catherine) “It’s word of mouth, it’s amazing that word on the street, the gate committees, the mothers talking to each other, good news spreads quickly bad news spreads even quicker. (James) “Word does get around.” (Juliet)

The data again illustrate how social capital enables parents to choose the best schools and to perpetuate the cycle by recommending the school to other like-minded parents who may mix with them in contexts and situations unreachable by certain groups. There are other factors that remain purely the domain of the state school headteachers:

“They would look at the Ofsted reports as well and they would read those and that is mainly what that is for.” (Margaret)

“Results drive parental choice, Ofsted reports, you live and die by your Ofsted.” (James)

“League tables, it depends where you live.” (Catherine)

The dangers of this process of choice are clearly explained by Prickett (2002):

“The declared aim of increasing parental choice is another good idea that has failed to materialise. In many areas, parents have no choice at all. The effect of league tables has been to create inequality and competition between schools rather than collaboration.” (Prickett, S. & Erskine-Hill, P. 2002:146)

Ironically, Juliet’s inclusion policy, a purely altruistic measure, has had an impact in attracting parents, although this is by chance rather than by design:

“[parents say] I have heard about your school and we are renowned for our special needs and we are a caring school.” (Juliet)

4.3.6.4 The Losers

What is noteworthy about the manner in which parents choose schools in the open market is the manner of ascertaining information in order to make the school choice is predominantly based on the parent’s cultural milieu and their own education background. As with all other elements of the market model that the data have displayed, the perpetuation of inequality and the cycle of failure, is most profound at the ‘bottom’ and the losers’ losses are proportional to their inability to access the correct information or to belong to the requisite social strata necessary to access a

‘good’ school. Simply, those who do not attend the dinner parties have limited choices. Again, this creates a vicious cycle:

“Schools with very high proportions of pupils from very poor families only flourish where they also recruit from among the aspirant in their local communities whatever their class or income.” (Adonis 2012:129)

Further exclusion is expressed in the data, as James notes,

“EAL [speakers of English as an Additional Language] parents get left behind because they get lumbered with whichever school there is within an inner city area, they get that influx of EAL and they don’t understand, they get left behind. But you also get pockets of the same community coming together they are new to the country, so they gravitate towards them.” (James)

Those new to a country and with limited English language skills would find it difficult to form bonds with an indigenous population and rather, naturally, gravitate to those of their home country thereby creating homogenous schools. These are often toward the bottom of the league tables with no extra support for headteachers who must find it difficult to help EAL (speakers of English as an Additional Language) students to access a rigid ethnocentric national curriculum.

More than two decades ago Tomlinson (1993) noted the problems faced by ethnic minority parents and schools, namely in schools unable to understand the ethnic minority parents’ languages, expectation and cultures.

“Teachers, despite some improvements in their education and training courses, continue to have difficulty informing themselves about the lives and backgrounds of ethnic minority parents and continue to resort to stereotyped beliefs about ethnic minority.” (Tomlinson in Munn 1993:135)

This is manifested for those students who are first generation immigrants and whose parents have may not have the requisite education, the cultural experience, contacts or language to play the ‘school choice’ game. For EAL (English as an Additional Language) read SEN (Special Educational Needs) students, as Juliet notes:

“I know some schools that were unwilling to take children with special needs in case it affected their performance. That meant it was damaging for the child just because it was going to affect the school in the tables.” (Juliet)

Catherine reflects that:

“We were seen as the school that would take anybody and we would. When a child joined us they became a member of our family and it didn’t matter what and where they came from.” (Catherine)

The data also displayed how schools could lose students due to its acceptance of all students irrespective of their social, ethnic or learning difficulties, Catherine highlights how this affected her school:

“Schools with better catchments saw themselves as better schools.” (Catherine)

A final indication of how economic factors affect parental choice is stated plainly by Juliet:

“Choice is limited by cars.” (Juliet)

Adler (1993) argues that:

“Since children’s access to schools is mediated through their parents, and some parents will actively seek to promote their children’s interests while others are indifferent to them, it cannot be argued, that from the standpoint of children, that schools are open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.” (Adler in Munn 1993:54)

Adler’s assertion of lack of equality point is repeatedly illustrated by the data. However, the notion of parents being ‘indifferent’ is not supported. In actual fact, the data illustrate an extremely complex relationship involving political ideologies, governmental policies and multifarious beliefs about education at the governmental level, which have sought to play an overriding role in the subjugation of parents in correlation to their socioeconomic background, this statement is supported by Stillman (1994):

“Central government appears to be using the rhetoric of parental choice as part of its drive to reduce educational management carried out by Local Education Authorities and to substitute strong central control with small-scale local control through governing bodies” (Stillman in Halsted 1994:21)

Catherine’s brief statement exemplifies the irony of parental choice:

“Parental choice is great if there is a choice but that isn’t always the case.”
(Catherine)

Evidently, mechanisms that have been implemented in order to ensure equality and fairness, most especially Local Education Authority school place appeals boards, have been at best impotent:

“Some parents are desperate to come in and they have the right to appeal but obviously if the cut offs there and we have gone through our admissions criteria there isn’t much that they would get through on really. So that’s why they still have to go through the appeals process.” (Margaret)

This is reflected in the ‘Good Schools Guide’ advice to parents seeking to appeal:

“Don’t get your hopes up too high – 70 per cent of appeals fail, with successful appeals often won on technicalities.” (Good Schools Guide 2015)

Indeed, at worst, devices such as the appeals system further disadvantage those parents and children most in need of such corrective measure, as outlined by Catherine:

“There is an appeals procedure and it is easier for an articulate and educated parent who is used to standing up for themselves. Some parents would just give up because they couldn’t possibly go through process because it would make them feel too vulnerable. So they just accept what they get given and just live with it, more educated parents will fight for what they want and be more persistent.” (Catherine)

In conclusion, the socioeconomic status of a school’s parent body impacts hugely on the day-to-day role of the headteacher. Whereas independent schools or those in affluent areas enjoy the support of a well-educated and participative parent body,

schools with a socioeconomically deprived parent body have greater difficulty engaging parents. Managerialism and its premise that all schools are similar and can be run in the same manner according to a cookie cutter formula is patently inadequate when considering the data laid out above.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to offer an overview of the research findings as outlined in Chapter Four, most especially in reference to the research question and its sub-questions as well as in reference to the critical analysis of the literature conducted in Chapter Two. This chapter will be structured by way of responding to each of the three sub-questions sequentially with a general conclusion responding to the main research question. I trust that this will allow for a clearly demarcated discussion. In order to remind the reader of the research question and sub-questions, they are as follows:

Main Research Question:

A Research Enquiry to Ascertain the Extent to Which Managerialism has Permeated the Headship Role in England.

Research Sub-questions:

- (1) In what manner have government policies and subsequent legislation impacted upon headship in England?
- (2) What has been the impact of managerialist conceptions of generic management and leadership on headteachers in England as manifested in national standards, training institutions and qualifications?
- (3) In what manner and to what extent have any such changes to headship affected teachers, students and parents?

5.1 Sub-question 1: *In what manner have government policies and subsequent legislation impacted upon headship in England?*

There was a great deal of debate in the literature review in reference to the manner in which government policy and initiatives have affected and impacted upon headship. (Gunter & Thomson 2010^b, Gewirtz 2002, Coulby & Bash 1991 et al.) Indeed, there was greater congruity between the findings of the literature and the findings of my research than in any of the other research questions.

The additions to the body of knowledge that my research added was the extent to which and the speed with which the policies propagated by the Conservative-Liberal Coalition government (especially as espoused in the White Paper 2010) had taken effect and the manner in which the initiatives had taken hold.

The problematic relationship between the government and state education were further highlighted by the independent school headteachers who were keenly aware that it was not a position in which they themselves would wish to be. Whereas it was consistently clear that there was no political preference expressed by any of the headteachers, the pressures of inconsistent government communication were clearly more noticeable in the experiences of the inexperienced headteachers and the problems were clearly seen as getting worse by James as perceived over the course of two governments (from New Labour to the Conservative-Liberal Coalition).

However, Catherine having retired from headship and having seen three very distinct phases of government come and go had clearly developed a pragmatic approach to government. Although, it is questionable whether she would have been able to maintain such pragmatism in the light of heightened intervention and in light of the ever-increasing politicisation of education, the manifestation of markets in education and the associated effects as demonstrated by the research findings.

Finally, with reference to government imposition, the data illustrated clearly that the state school headteachers were intrinsically and inescapably bound to follow government directives and that doing so led to conflicts and difficulties in their professional practice. In spite of this, they did their very best to do what they believed was best for the students and teachers in their schools, as well as for the parents. As outlined in Chapter 4, a governmental position that perceives every school as the same and expects every school to function in the same manner is a system that is flawed and will lead to difficulties as evidenced in my research findings above.

5.2 Sub-question 2: *What has been the impact of managerialist conceptions of generic management and leadership on headteachers in England as manifested in national standards, training institutions and qualifications?*

In response to this research aim, the literature concentrated on initiatives and beliefs that the job of the headteacher could be categorised into a series of competencies, Male (2006), Orchard (2007) and also recognised an initiative called 'Tomorrow's Heads' founded on the premise that headteachers could be individuals with no teaching qualifications or school experience (NCSL 2012).

The belief that a non-educationalist could be a headteacher was refuted by the respondents and in terms of the belief that a set of generic headship skills that could be 'taught', the literature review raised the issue of performativity and the foundation of managerialism in this belief (Ball 2003, Thrupp & Willmott 2003, Busher 2007 et al.). For the headteachers, it was equally clear that the qualities and competencies required of a 'good' headteacher were not 'teachable'.

It was also apparent from the headteachers that any form of generic training was of limited value. However, the newly qualified headteachers, Margaret and Juliet, had found the NPQH of value. Perhaps this is due to the fact that that which they had learned on the course was still fresh in their minds and applicable and also due to the fact that the version they completed was different from the one that, for example, James had completed.

Indeed, having completed that version of the NPQH myself, I can understand how they could have seen its benefit as it involved the development of professional networks between new heads. It is therefore unfortunate that even this limited value has now been extinguished as the Coalition government made the programme more theoretical as directed by the White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (Department of Education 2010).

In terms of a generic set of competencies as manifested in documents such as the National Standards for Headteachers it was very clear that there was little correlation between the competencies that the headteachers recognised as being important and the competencies espoused in the Standards. Indeed, the discourse of the state school headteachers lacked any explicit reference to the National Standards for Headteachers.

In terms of the National College for School Leadership (now the National College for Teaching and Leadership). The propagation of its success was clearly refuted by the research findings and the perspective of Thrupp (2005) was supported. Again, as with the National Standards for Headteachers, the National College for School Leadership was not referred to by any of the respondents.

The shift from welfarism to managerialism was seen in the data, most especially in Catherine's response as her experience spanned the chronological period before and after the 1988 Education Reform Act. Although it is may not be entirely prudent to refer to the 'golden age' welfarism, it is noteworthy that characteristics such as an ethos of public service, cooperation, consultation and values-based decision making (Gewirtz 2002:32) did seem to be lacking from the respondents' school contexts. The propagation rather than negation, by state intervention, of these elements would have a positive impact on headteachers' practice and the schools they serve.

5.3 Sub-question 3: *In what manner and to what extent have any such changes to headship affected teachers, students and parents?*

The final research question sought to look at how managerialism had impacted upon the key constituent bodies of schools. The data highlighted the impact of managerialism on the manner in which parents chose schools. The multifarious relationship between governmental policies, the politicisation of education, marketization and the experiences of parents as perceived by the headteachers were far more pronounced than expressed by my literature review.

The centrality and significance of parents in the makeup of a school and a school's 'success' was repeatedly and categorically substantiated by the data. At the other end of the spectrum the impact of parents upon the professional lives of headteachers was also visible and the greater the socioeconomic deprivation of the student body, the greater pressure and stress it placed on headteachers and the greater it impinged upon their ability to serve these students.

Of course, by default when we speak of difficulties for parents we are indeed referring to difficulties for students who are indeed the ones who suffer from such deprivation. We are reminded of Catherine's poignant phrase *'they lived in a fragile*

culture'. At the school level, the headteachers sought to stabilise this but it was clear from the research that this was in spite of rather than because of any governmental support.

The data highlighted that managerialization manifested, most especially, in marketization had a hugely negative impact on parents from discernible socioeconomically deprived groups. Although, it is clear that research pertaining to children in terms of their experiences of being from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds is fraught with difficulty the research did highlight manners in which children are ultimately adversely affected by managerialist doctrines in education.

The impact on staff was also highlighted by the literature review (Clark & Newman 1997) O'Brien & Down (2002), Noordegraaf & De Wit (2012) et al.) and supported by the research findings. The pragmatic realisation of this for staff was the pressure that the state school headteachers noted that the staff were under and the difficulty in recruiting high quality staff to schools in socioeconomically deprived areas. Indeed, there was no evidence from the independent school headteachers, Elizabeth and Charlotte, that their teachers felt any such pressures or that they had difficulties recruiting teachers.

5.4 Conclusion: Managerialism's Permeation of Headship in England

When responding to the extent of managerialism's permeation of headship role in England, it is clear, in accordance with the data analysed in the previous chapter, that since the 1988 Education Reform Act managerialism has become embedded in the headship role in England and has irrevocably and irreversibly permeated the headship role. It is worth remembering that, as I stated above, managerialism is not an entity in itself but is the manifestation of a neoliberal doctrine and is pragmatically realised in the form of government policies and practices.

However, as detailed in the literature review and clearly reflected in the research findings, the government policies and practices stated above have resulted from the doctrines of three major political parties and the manner in which managerialism has permeated headship has been clearly denoted and displayed as being from the deliberate and calculated education policy of Conservative, New Labour and

Conservative-Liberal Democrat governments. This ostensibly tripartite support for such policies has further entrenched managerialism in discourse and practice pertaining to the headship role in England.

It is also necessary to recognise that there were significant pressures recognised by the independent school headteachers. In the context of private education, it is clear that the demands are great and that the performative environment is incredibly challenging and increasingly so. The stress that is faced by independent school headteachers is also clearly outlined in recent literature (Carman 2013, Peel 2015, Turner 2015).

This manifestation and its effects have been outlined in the literature review, in my research findings and in the preceding discussion which has clearly highlighted other areas such as the impact on parents, the impact on headteachers and the vast differences experienced by state school and, conversely, independent school headteachers. The reflection of this void in the given context and the given time add to the body of literature and offer fresh evidence to be analysed and highlight areas for further research.

The impact of managerialism as reflected in the everyday lives of the state school headteachers has been tangibly illustrated and the impact as outlined in my response to the research question and sub-questions above denotes that all of those with vested interests in school have also subsequently been influenced by managerialist policies and practices. The permeation of managerialism in headship in England and the resultant consequences have been highlighted in this research enquiry.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Areas for Further Research

I believe that there is a key area that this research enquiry has highlighted as being suitable for further research. This belief is based on the findings of my research and also based on the area in which I felt there was a lack of research or at least lack of research that was contextually and chronologically relevant to my study and a study of the issues that my research enquiry examined.

I feel that the experience of parents from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds is of great importance to understanding the difficulties of the headship role in England. There also is a need for greater research regarding the situation of immigrant parents from socioeconomically deprived groups and most especially a need to gain insight from newly arrived immigrants

Therefore, more voices need to be heard from these parents, more research needs to be conducted that outlines the experiences of these parents and their assumptions about school and their perceptions of education. This will allow for a further analysis of headship and a greater understanding of how a headteacher may best act in response to the complex issues that parents face. It would also be of value to continue to research the experiences of headteachers in such schools.

In light of increasing immigration and an increasingly diverse parent body, this area simply cannot be ignored if headteachers in England are able to provide a meaningful and empowering educational experience for each and every one of their students irrespective of the student's socioeconomic status. There is scope to ensure the improvement of schooling as a result of engagement with the aforementioned groups and by way of gaining their unique perspectives.

6.2 Final Thoughts

In conclusion, it has been a long journey that has at times seemed insurmountable but has ultimately allowed me to both extend my own critical thinking and analytical skills, to expand my knowledge and also to proffer relevant and up-to-date knowledge to the current body of work. It would be naïve to imagine that a humble

research enquiry could lead to any great change but if any element of my research findings is questioned, debated or leads to a positive response then I believe that my endeavours will have been worthwhile.

The data illustrated that a headteacher's role in England, and indeed their daily practice, will be determined predominantly by the socioeconomic status of the students in her or his care. The greater the level of deprivation and lack of stability in the student body, the more difficult the school was to manage in terms of the time that the headteacher was able to dedicate the various tasks associated with headship.

It is necessary that I recognise the efforts of all of the headteachers whom I was fortunate enough to interview, irrespective of their context. It is clear that individuals willing to dedicate themselves to a greater cause, willing to sacrifice their own personal lives for that of the children in their care can make a difference. However, while the headship role in England's state schools is bound by a managerialist doctrine, the true benefit of these altruist individuals' efforts will not be as profound as it should and could be.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Schedule

Research enquiry: thesis for professional doctorate

Interview Schedule

- Begin by thanking the participant for their time and explaining the purpose of the research as well as explaining the ethical guidelines that will be followed especially considering anonymity. Formally request permission for the interview to be recorded.

Area One: General Background

- 1) For how long have you been a headteacher?
- 2) What type of school are you the headteacher of? Have you worked in any other types of school as either a headteacher or in other roles? Please specify:
- 3) What is the age range of the students in your school?
- 4) How many students are there?
- 5) How many teachers do you oversee? How many staff do you oversee?
- 6) Can you tell me about your career and how you became a headteacher?
- 7) Can you me about your qualifications (university attended, subjects etc)?
- 8) Do you have any qualifications that are specifically related to headship?

Have you taken any generic qualifications or training programmes to assist you as a headteacher? Are there any programmes that you would feel would assist you further as a headteacher?
- 9) What are your 3 strengths as a headteacher?
- 10) What are your 3 areas for development in headship?

Area Two: Perceptions of Headship

- 1) What is your role and what are your responsibilities as a headteacher?
(prompt: may need to repeat latter part of the question)
- 2) What is the moral purpose of headship?
- 3) Do you think the term ‘headteacher’ correctly defines the job that you do? (If no) What would be a more suitable term?
- 4) What are the main challenges of being a headteacher? (prompt: 3 specific examples)
- 5) How do you overcome these challenges?
- 6) What are the greatest obstacles to your school’s success?
- 7) What is the best thing about being a headteacher? (prompt: what gives you the most pleasure?)
- 8) How important is the headteacher (emphasize: headteachers in general) to the success of the school?
- 9) What is a ‘good’ school? What are the key elements that lead to a good school?
- 10) What is a ‘failing’ school? What are the key factors that cause a school to ‘fail’?
- 11) Do you believe there are any traits that a headteacher possesses that would be difficult to ‘teach’?

Area Three: Managerialism

- 1) To what extent can schools be run in the same way as businesses? (prompt: In what ways?)

- 2) What are the differences between managing a school and managing a business?
- 3) What can headteachers learn from the business world?
- 4) Would it be possible for an individual with no teaching experience to become an effective headteacher? What difficulties would they face? What qualities would they need?
- 5) What are the key factors that influence parental choice of schooling?
- 6) What do you do to make your school more attract students (parents)?
- 7) Are league tables a help or a hindrance? Are league tables fair?
- 8) In what ways can competition between schools have a positive impact on a school?
- 9) In what ways can competition between schools be damaging?
- 10) To what extent does government policy influence you as a headteacher (prompt; positive? Negative? In what ways?)